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ABUNDANT LIFE,

AND OTHER SERMONS.



ABUNDANT LIFE,

AND OTHER SERMONS.

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BY THE

Michael

REV. M. F. SADLER,

PREBENDARY OF WELLS; RECTOR OF HONITON; AUTHOR OF "CHURCH
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SERMONS.

I.

LIFE AND ABUNDANT LIFE.

JOHN x. 10.

"I am come that they might have life; and that they might have it more abundantly."

THIS is a very wonderful saying. For when these words were uttered the world was above four thousand years old. During four thousand years, perhaps many more, men had been living on the earth, begetting children; imparting, that is, their life to others, who in their turn imparted of their life to those who came after them; and yet here is One Who rises up and says to men who were to all appearance sharing the same life with Himself, "I am come that they may have life."

But some one may rejoin, "He means spiritual life;" this explanation, however, only makes the saying, humanly speaking, more perplexing; for if spiritual life be, as we assume it to be, the knowledge of God, Who God is, and what He has done, and what He will do for us,

then this knowledge had been in the world and in the very native land of the Speaker of these words for above two thousand years. Above two thousand years before this, God had said to this man's forefather, "Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield and thine exceeding great reward;" and again, God said to him, "I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect." God could not say such things to one spiritually dead. The mere hearing of such words from God betokened some life in him who received them.

And this knowledge had largely increased since Abraham's time, for Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, and Daniel had received revelations of God's truth.

And yet this man, under the very shadow of the one temple of the God of Abraham and of David, stood up and said, "I am come that they might have life."

And it was no passing saying this, for He said again, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life;" and again He said "I am the Resurrection and the Life;" and again, "Because I live ye shall live also;" and again, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life;" and it was witnessed of Him "In Him was life."

How then could men have lived—lived with some life of God long before Jesus came, and He rise up and say, not once or twice, but in

one form or other many times, "I am come that ye may have life" ?

Now I think that we may be permitted to draw an illustration from nature which may help to show us how this could be. For we see all around us life, not uniform, but in every conceivable form and degree. There is the stone, cold, hard, and dead ; but the rain moistens it and the sun shines upon it, and there creeps over it a thin coat of many colours, and this has life—the lowest form of life that can be called " life "—but still " life." This life of the lichen rises into that of the moss, which has a higher existence still, for it has flowers and seeds ; and so life rises in the scale and manifests itself. And besides this there seems to be in some plants the beginning of a higher life. There are plants, I myself know of three, that seem to have the beginning of that higher life which exists in nerves of sensation, for they shrink when we touch them ; and, more marvellous still, those who have explored the forests of tropical America tell us that in the dark depths of those dense woods, from which the light of day is all but shut out, the creeping plants, as they twine round the huge trunks, struggle and contend with one another to get at the sunlight, and to breathe the air which is at the top ; and one has told us that he has seen in their struggles to reach some opening to the heavens above " a manifested eagerness and a

cunning craft" in supplanting one another which seems almost human in its selfishness. And then we come to the animal world, and there is the life of the worm rising into that of the higher brutes, and at last culminating in the life of man.

Now, measured by man's life, its busy thoughts, its manifold capacities, and its far-reaching hopes, the worm seems dead, just as the tree seems dead by the side of the worm, with its powers of motion and its rudiments of a will; and yet compared to the dead stone even the lowest plant has abundant life.

And so it is in the moral world. There is life, and there is life. Compared with the Christian the Jew was scarcely alive, and yet compared with the heathen around him he had the very life of God. We do not deny for a moment that God gave, before the time of Christ, foretastes or outgoings of the higher life which was to come in through Him; and even among the heathen He raised up as His witnesses many who, "having not God's law, did by nature the things contained in the law, and so were a law unto themselves, showing the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness."

And the converse of all this is fearfully true. The baptized Christian is at times reproved by the Jew, and the circumcised Jew, when he fell from his high standing as a witness for God

among the heathen, made the name of the God he bore to be blasphemed among the Gentiles through his greater degradation. Nature, too, has a parable to teach this; for the higher the life the more offensive the corruption of its death. The corruption of the animal is far more sickening than the decay of the tree.

In the midst, then, of the teeming life of Jerusalem, and surrounded by the spiritual life of the then religion of God His Father, our Lord said, "I am come that they may have life."

Let us try to explore, reverently, something of the depth of such astonishing words.

First of all, notice that He says, "I am come." "For us men, and for our salvation He came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man." Thus we of His Church understand His words, "I am come." No man who ever trod this earth knew as our Lord could know, and could say as our Lord could say, *why* He had come here. Few, if any, know, except in some vague way, why they are here. .

We know in a general way that we are here for the glory of God and to do His will, but beyond this we know little or nothing. It may be that God's glory may be promoted by that which we conceive to be our special mission coming to nothing, and that our true work may

be simply to prepare the way for those that come after us.

But Christ knew *why* He was come. He knew what special work He had to do, and how it was to be brought about, and so He says, authoritatively and definitely: "I am come into the world that I might bear witness of the truth." "I came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give My life a ransom." "I am come, not to send peace, but a sword."

And now, seeing He is come that we may have life, how does He give us life?

Now He is the life of His people because He gives to them the knowledge of God and of Himself, as the Son of God, according to His words, "This is life eternal: that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent;" and besides, He enables them by the Spirit which He gives, to lay hold of this knowledge, so that it becomes living faith; and besides this, in a still more wonderful way, He gives to them that whereby they are strengthened and refreshed more directly from Himself.

He gives to His people Divine knowledge. "I am come that My people may have life," means, "I am come to reveal to them the Father." God spake by the prophets, but respecting the revelation of the Father by and in the Son that Son Himself says, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." He not

only teaches us of the Father, He shows to us by His own life of goodness and patience and holiness and truth what manner of God His Father is. Above all, He shows to us by His own submission to death, in order that He might drink to the dregs the cup which His Father had given Him, what love God has for sinful man.

Moses and David and Isaiah, as well as Christ, could speak of God as the Shepherd of His people, but it was reserved to Jesus, by the teaching of His unspeakable humiliation in His Incarnation, and by His own submission in death, to demonstrate to what a distance, and into what a wilderness, God, the great and good Shepherd, went after the lost sheep, to seek it and to bring it home.

Now Jesus, as our Teacher of truth, teaches us all this respecting His Father and Himself in order that we may have life; but no mere teaching, no mere telling us the truth, will give life. The most precious truths of God may fall upon the ear and never reach the heart, and so the words of the prophet are ever being fulfilled: "By hearing men shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing, they shall see, and shall not perceive." That His people might have life the Son of God did not merely teach and preach truth respecting God, and God's redemption, but He came to give these truths living power, so that they should be the

seed of life within us; and so He came to give us of His Spirit to open our hearts to the truth, and to enable us to embrace it and retain it, so that we should live by the faith of the Son of God. Jesus came that we might have the Spirit of God, so that we should apprehend the truth of God, as perfectly as it is possible for creatures of flesh and blood to do so. He came and suffered, and even went away, in order that we might have the Spirit of God: "If I depart," He says, "I will send Him unto you."

And now because of this gift of the Spirit the true Christian realises and assimilates, as it were, into his whole inner being the truths which God has been pleased to reveal respecting Himself, His Son, His Spirit, the atoning Death of the Son of God, His Resurrection as the pledge of justification here and immortality hereafter, His intercession, His sympathy, His indwelling; so that the Christian, no matter where he is, can be and is "in Christ." All this the Christian not only hears with the ear and learns with the understanding, but feeds upon as the spiritual food of his soul. There is, as it were, a certain "hand of his mind" which holds these truths fast. This is true faith, and this Christ works in us by His Spirit, according to His own engagement: "He (the Holy Ghost) shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you."

But this is not enough. Christ has more in

store still, for we are privileged not only to partake of life, but of *His* own life; and this because He is the Second Adam. As Adam has transmitted to us by nature his weak, corrupt, dying life, so Christ makes us partakers of His new, heavenly, and eternal life.

Now this He gives us in the sacraments of His Church. Christ is the founder, not of a mere system of teaching, but of a kingdom—a spiritual, mystical heavenly kingdom, but still a kingdom. Now a kingdom is by its very nature outward and visible. It must, as being such, take its place amongst the things of time and sense. To do this it must have outward signs, and tokens which must be outward; for the kingdom, to be a kingdom at all, must be, to a certain extent, outward. And yet these things cannot be wholly or even principally outward, for the kingdom is spiritual, having its Head at the right hand of God, and made present by His Spirit; and so the outward signs and tokens of it are not mere badges of external profession, but outward visible signs of inward spiritual grace.

The things said in Scripture by Christ and by His servants respecting the sacraments of His Church are the most startling things in the Book of God.

After considering them for years, and comparing them with other parts of God's truth, there is one conclusion respecting them forced upon me: that they are the means by which we

are made partakers of the life of Christ's human nature as the Second Adam ; that as we partake of the first Adam's whole nature, body, soul, and spirit, to our infinite loss, so we must be made partakers of the Second Adam's whole nature, body, soul, and spirit, to our infinite gain.

Christianity is most emphatically a dispensation of grace, and so the sacraments in such a system must be means of grace. Christianity, too, like any other system ordained by God, is a well ordered system, and so each part of it will have its proper function, and so the sacraments must have their function ; we must get some grace by sacraments which we cannot ordinarily get in any other way, for Christ would have ordained nothing superfluous, nothing that can be safely dispensed with. If reading the Bible, or listening to preaching, or exercising an internal act of faith in any truth or truths of God had been sufficient, Christ would have ordained nothing further. But He has ordained something over and above a purely spiritual system ; He has ordained that our faith should be embodied in, and supplemented by, certain outward acts of a most peculiar character, and if we would partake of His life we must fall into His mind in this.

And it is not hard for us, us, I mean, of the Church, to do so. With respect to the Holy Communion, what we have to do is, to throw ourselves heart and soul into the service which

we have inherited. By so doing we shall (God helping us by His Spirit) realise all that is said in Scripture respecting the Blessed Sacrament, for there is not a saying of our Lord or of His Apostles which has to do with that sacrament which is not interwoven into our service. Of course, when I speak of the Holy Communion being the instrument of the Spirit to bring about our union with the Second Adam, I mean that it is such in any saving way only to those who exercise faith. And this faith, as far as I can see, must not be merely a general faith in God's general promises. It must be a particular faith in God's working in the Eucharist, according to the words of the Catechism : " Faith, whereby we stedfastly believe the promises of God made to us in that Sacrament." It is a faith which, when it hears Christ say, " Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood ye have no life in you," makes answer, " Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief;" " Lord, I would desire what Thou offerest; quicken Thou my desire."

Christ has come that we may have life; i.e., He has come that we may know that God is our God, and will be to us, through eternity, all that God can be, and will do for us, in eternity, all that God can do. He has come, that, by His Spirit dwelling in us, we may bear the fruits of goodness, righteousness, and truth.

But He has also come that we may have this

life in no stinted measure. "I am come that . . . they may have it more abundantly."

Now, what is this grant of more abundant life, as distinguished from the grant of life?

Must we not set it forth in this way? It is life to the Christian soul when he looks to the Cross of Christ, and when he sees there Him Who knew no sin made sin for us. But there is a further application of the doctrine of the Cross enforced both by our Lord and by His servants.

Christ says much more than "Look to Me dying on the cross, and lay your sins on Me," when He says, "He that will come after Me must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." And His servant, St. Paul, says much more than "I look to the Cross and trust in the atonement wrought out upon it," when he says, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, *by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*"

It is life that we should look to the Cross and trust in the atonement; but it is more abundant life to exercise ourselves in self-denial and self-sacrifice, and by the Cross to mortify sin and be crucified to the world. To take trouble about our religion, to choose the rough path rather than the smooth, to visit the sick, to give up time to teaching the ignorant, which we might more pleasantly spend in other things, and at inconvenience to ourselves to attend

daily worship: such things seem sorry self-denials compared with the self-denials of the primitive saints and martyrs, but they are beginnings. Perhaps some who say that they look to the Cross and trust in Him Who hung upon it have not even begun these.

We know not what is coming on the Church. They who have studied well the current of thought and opinion on the Continent tell us that the spirit abroad predominant among the masses is not one indifferent to Christianity in any shape, not even hostile to it, but fiercely intolerant of its very existence.

Unless we deny ourselves and put ourselves to inconvenience to do something for Christ when the profession of His Name is easy, may we not justly fear lest He leave us to forsake Him altogether when the profession of His Name is hard to flesh and blood?

Again, take another case, in which the grant of more abundant life is manifest, and that is, intercessory prayer. It is a sign of life when men pray for themselves, for the wants of their own souls, and for the souls of those more immediately connected with them; but intercessions for others, for the Church of Christ, for the spread of the Gospel, for the conversion of sinners, for the building up of saints in the faith—all this is a sign of more abundant life than prayer for ourselves only or for those who are as ourselves. As one has well said, "Christ

did not die to leave man as he was, sinful, ignorant, and miserable. He did not die to see His purchased possession as feeble in good works, as corrupt, as poor spirited and as desponding as before He came. Rather He died to renew him after His own image, to make him a being that He might delight and rejoice in, to make him a partaker of the Divine nature, to fill him within and without with a flood of grace and glory, to pour upon him gift upon gift, virtue upon virtue, and power upon power, each acting upon each, and working together one and all, till he become an angel upon earth instead of a rebel and an outcast. He died to bestow upon him that privilege which implies or involves all others, and brings him into nearest resemblance to Himself, the privilege of intercession. . . . Christ intercedes above and the Christian intercedes below. Why should he linger in the doorway, praying for pardon, who has been allowed to share in the grace of the Lord's Passion, to die with Him and to rise again? He is already in a capacity for higher things. His prayer henceforth takes a higher range, and contemplates, not himself merely, but others also." If, then, we have life so as to pray for ourselves, let us have, as we may, and as we ought to have, more abundant life, so that as priests of Christ and of God we should pray for others. It is no presumption to aim at that which Christ came to bestow.

If He came to make us priests of God and of Himself we but honour Him the more when we exercise our priesthood.

Let our times of Holy Communion be especially times of Intercession. They who come to communicate and are not, like the clergy, employed all the time in administering the elements, have much time to spare, and they should account these moments precious indeed. For the Lord's Death is there being shown forth before God, angels, and men. The great sacrificial memorial of the Son of God is going on. We are then joining in that great act of Intercession which is going on at the right hand of God. Be much, then, on your knees at such a time. Have the wants of your Church, the wants of your families and friends, the wants of your ministers, the conversion of sinners, the advance of religion, the spread of the Gospel, the unity of the mystical Body of Christ—have these all-important things much in your hearts and on your lips, and you know not what blessings you may call down from Him Who came to confer upon us, His brethren, no small benefits, no common-place privileges, Who came to fit us for no mean duties, and to enable us to fill no mean places in His heavenly kingdom.

II.

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION A NECESSITY.

ACTS ii. 24.

"Jesus of Nazareth . . . whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death : because it was not possible that He should be holden of it."

THE one great miraculous manifestation of the truth of the Gospel is the Resurrection, which took place as on the morning of this Easter Day.

The Incarnation may have been a greater miracle, perhaps, far greater, if it be lawful to compare two things of which God alone knows the dimensions ; but the Incarnation was not so *manifest* an exhibition of the power of God. The Incarnation was hidden from the world ; the Fathers say that it was hidden from the evil powers of the unseen world ; but it was not so with the Resurrection. "He showed himself alive by many infallible proofs," and in the spiritual invisible world "He spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them, openly triumphing over them."

The Scriptures invest the Resurrection of Christ with a glory far greater than that of the greatest of His own mighty works—with a glory, for instance, far, far greater than that

attached to the resurrection of Lazarus, though the same kind of power was exerted in both cases. Jesus, before He was crucified, did many miracles; according to His own saying He had done amongst His countrymen "works that none other man did," but after He rose from the dead everything else that He had done was nothing in comparison of this, that He had raised Himself up on the third day.

One illustration of this will suffice. The Apostles were His witnesses, His chosen and commissioned witnesses. "Ye shall be," he says, "witnesses to me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." But to what did they bear witness? What was the fact, or truth, or doctrine, or mystery respecting Himself, to which, above all else, they actually bare witness? His Resurrection, unquestionably. When one was chosen to fill up the place of the traitor, it was to be a "witness of His Resurrection." Of the joint testimony of the Apostolic band it is written, "with great power gave the Apostles witness of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus." When a heathen described the impression which he had received from a judicial investigation which he had held upon the conduct of the foremost in labour of all the Apostles, he said that his accusers "had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed

to be alive." St. Paul himself speaks of his own life thus: "I continue unto this day witnessing both to small and great that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead."

Such was beyond doubt the Apostolic testimony to Jesus. It is not described as a testimony to the holiness of Christ's life, or to the excellency of His example, or to His being the perfect man, or to the dignity and capabilities of human nature in Him. It is not a testimony to the power of His mighty works, such as His turning the water into wine, or feeding the multitudes in the wilderness, but to His own Resurrection, as the miracle of miracles, as being that one which crowned all, supplemented all, gave its own meaning to all which He had said, or done, or suffered.

Such, then, was the Resurrection of Jesus in the eyes of the Apostles: evidently the first and greatest thing which they had to say. But in the text which forms part of the first Christian sermon ever preached, a sermon, too, upon the Resurrection, this very crowning miracle is treated as if it had taken place, as one should say, in the natural course of things. "Having loosed the bonds of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." When it is not possible that an event should be otherwise than as it has actually happened it takes place as a matter of course. We do not, in an

ordinary way of speaking, call that a miracle which cannot but be. A miracle is that which cannot take place in the ordinary course of things, but requires some Divine, or angelic, or diabolical power to alter the natural course of things in order to bring it to pass.

How, then, can the Apostle say that the one stupendous miracle of the dispensation—that, in fact, without which the dispensation could not have been—how can he say that this was a thing which took place according to the course of things? All men are holden by the bonds of death. It is natural that they should be since the Fall, however it may have been before. How is it that the Apostle applies language to this Resurrection of a kind which would suit it if it had taken place naturally?

Because there are two ways of looking at all that Jesus did and suffered, according as we regard Him as God or as man. As man, it was natural for Him to die and natural for Him to be holden by the bonds of death. As God, it was according to His infinite and incorruptible Godhead to live for ever, and therefore impossible that He should be holden by the bonds of death.

Now let us look to this, and may God give to us a right understanding of it and of its glorious issues.

Christ was man—the Man Christ Jesus. Because He was man, He died and was buried

as all His brethren are. He was one with them in birth, for He was born as they are born. He was one with them in life, sustained by the same food, breathing the same air, having flesh and blood, and a human soul that could be separated from its tenement.

But He said of Himself, "I am the Life." He had life in Himself. As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself. And this life was in His human nature, in His very flesh. "I am," He says, "the Living Bread which came down from heaven. Whoso eateth my flesh hath eternal life."

If He was the Life how could He die? Much more if He was Divine Life. If He was the fountain of all life, so that if He lives we shall live also; if, too, He was the Receiver and the Giver of that Spirit, Who is the Lord, and Giver of Life, how could He die?

There are some who ask, How could He rise again? We of His Church think that it would be more reasonable to ask, How could He die? How could that flesh which was to be the life of the world be separated from its soul in death? If He was the Life how could He die? Now do not think that I am at all trifling, or putting a most sacred matter lightly, by treating it thus. Our blessed Lord with very great emphasis assures us that His parting with His life for a season was voluntary on His part. "No man,"

He says, "can take My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." When He died He surrendered His own life, and had it not taken from Him, as we may have. He submitted to death, as that which He need not have endured; whereas we die naturally in the common course of events when our allotted time has expired.

Now this was the reason why He could not be holden of death. He had submitted to death, not as the penalty of His own sin, but for a purpose, to make atonement, and when that purpose was fully accomplished He rose again.

I trust that I shall not be judged as irreverent if I bring one or two illustrations from the natural world of what I mean.

We see a large beam of wood. Naturally this beam of wood will float on the surface of the water. For some purpose we desire that it should be under water, and we have to exert some degree of force, or even of violence, to keep it under water, and the moment we relax the force it obeys the law of its nature, and rises to the surface again. Or again, we have a bow of elastic wood or a spring of steel. Naturally this wood or this iron is straight, but we apply force more or less violent, and so we keep the bow bent or the steel curved; but if we relax for a moment our pressure the wood or the steel flies back to its natural position.

Now nothing can be more opposite to the original Divine Life than death; and the Son of the Eternal God, fully sharing in His Father's Godhead, took our whole nature, and by so doing imparted His Divine Eternal Life to it. He submitted, however, for a purpose of love, to death; but it was only for a time and for a purpose; that is, to save us; it was a voluntary, and, we may say, a forced submission on His part. There had to be a violence done to His nature to enable the body in which there dwells the fulness of the Godhead to undergo death. That violence, in His infinite love, He exerts on Himself; but when the reason for it has passed away, and all the ends of His submission to a thing so unnatural to Him are fulfilled, He rises above the water-flood of death. His original Divine life reasserts its power. He rises from the dead.* So we see

* Since writing the above I have come across the following passage in South's 'Sermons': "First of all, then, the hypothetical union of Christ's human nature to His divine, rendered a perpetual duration under death absolutely impossible. For how could that which was united to the great source and principle of life be finally prevailed over by death, and pass into a state of perpetual darkness and oblivion? Even while Christ's body was divided from His soul, yet it ceased not to maintain an intimate indissoluble relation to His Divinity. It was assumed into the same person; for, according to the Creed of Athanasius, 'as the soul and body make one man, so the Divine nature and the human make one Christ.' And if so, is it imaginable that the Son of God could have one of His natures rent wholly from His person? His divinity, as it were, buoyed up his sinking humanity,

what a wondrous yet palpable truth there is in the text, "The pains (or bonds) of death were loosed, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." It was not possible, because He was God. It was not possible, because His Godhead dwelt in the flesh; in His very Body dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. In wondrous condescension He had submitted to what was unnatural to Him. By this His submission He had reconciled all things to God, and by His flesh had made a way open between God and us. Now that the purpose of His submission is accomplished He no longer holds Himself under submission. His own original Life in His Divine nature, inseparably joined in one personality to His human nature, reasserts itself. He rises again.

But what is all this to us?

Much, very much indeed; for, blessed be God, He is not only *the* Life; He is *our* Life. "Your life," says the Apostle, "is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our Life, shall appear." And Jesus Himself says, "Because I

and preserved it from a total dissolution; for as while the soul continues joined to the body (still speaking in *sensu composito*), death cannot pass upon it; forasmuch as that is the proper effect of their separation; so while Christ's manhood was retained in a personal conjunction with His Godhead, the bands of death were but feeble and insignificant, like the withes and cords upon Sampson, while He was inspired with the mighty presence and assistance of God's Spirit."—Sermon 34.

live ye shall live also ;” and again He says, “ I am the Resurrection and the Life.”

Seeing then that it was not possible that the Son of God could be holden of death, if we are in Him partakers of His nature, it is equally impossible that we should be holden by death. If there be any truth, any reality in the teaching of Scripture, that He is the Head, and we who are baptized into Him and abide in Him are the members, and so He and we form together, as it were, one organisation ; then it follows, that if death could not hold Him it cannot hold us. It is impossible to suppose that the Head should rise again, and the members of that Head be eternally held by the grave.

St. Paul treats the Resurrection of the Head and that of the members as inseparable. “ If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ raised.” “ If the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised. Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept ; for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.”

So then, brethren, if we partake of the new nature we cannot be holden by death, because that nature is Christ's. We may be, doubtless we shall be, under the apparent dominion of death longer than our Head was, for He was held by the bonds of death not three whole days, and we may be several hundred years. But what of that ? A thousand years are with the

Lord as one day. If in any real way we have Him in us, we shall rise as He rose, and because He rose, i.e., by the power of His resurrection. "A living head," as has been well said, "must needs have living members; and a Head that is risen must raise His members in due season, at that day when 'He shall come to be glorified in His saints' in the fulness of His kingdom. Our union with Him, therefore, is no figure or metaphor, but is truth and spirit, reality and life. He *is* our resurrection."*

But in another sense He, our Risen Jesus, is our Life. He is the Life of the soul or spirit, of our thinking selves, of that within us which knows good and evil, of that within us which can know God or reject God. In the blessed Jesus there was not only the life of that manhood, which He shares with all His brethren; there was that life of the soul; in that His spirit ever rose far above the world, and the flesh, and sin, and communed with God, and in will was one with God. "I have meat," He says, "that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." And He rose again in order that He might impart this life to our souls, as well as the resurrection life to our bodies.

You all know some true Christian. You have never, it is true, seen one who in everything comes up to the Divine ideal. There is,

* Manning, vol. iv. s. 20.

and always will be, in some points a falling short; yet you know that the Christian has a life within him which the world has not. There is nothing in the world; nothing, I mean, which has its origin in this world, that can make a man a Christian. No mere worldly education, no mere worldly philosophy, no mere worldly motives, no merely human influence of any sort, will make a man, even in our poor and low way, a Christian. The word of God, the preaching of the Cross, the application of the virtue of the Cross by the sacraments of the Church, the joining in united prayer and intercession, the exercise of penitential discipline, the example of those in whom the grace of God is having a more perfect work,—these things contribute in their several ways to make men true Christians; but none of these things are of this world. All the powers of this world could not have written one book of the Bible. All the powers of this world could not have joined an inward and spiritual grace to the outward visible sign of a sacrament. The Church and its ministers, the Bible, the sacraments, contribute in their respective places to make true Christians, because Christ has in Him the fulness of Divine Life, and because He died and rose again that He might communicate the power of this Divine Life from Himself to us, one by one, through the Church, its sacraments, its ministrations,

and its witness to Him. The power of this Divine Life has been vouchsafed to you in Holy Baptism. You were then so made partakers of the Death and Resurrection of Christ that it can henceforth be said to you in the words of the Lesson for this day, "If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death" (and that the Apostle asserts we all were in the font), "if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also of His resurrection. Our old man is crucified with Him that the body of sin might be destroyed." "In that He liveth He liveth unto God." "So likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Now, the meaning of all this to us is, that no baptized man need to be the slave of sin; no baptized man need be irreligious, worldly, sensual; for a thing has been done to him in the spiritual world, answering to the process of grafting in the natural world: He has been grafted into Christ, that he may bear fruit unto God. You have not to seek grace as for the first time, as if you have had none vouchsafed to you. You have rather to seek more grace. You have to stir up the gift within you. You have to pray God not to take His Holy Spirit from you.

When you see the Christian full of devotion to God, it is because the life of Christ's Spirit

was full of devotion, that is, full of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, and Christ has risen again to impart to us of the devotion of His spiritual life. When you see the Christian unselfish, caring for others, giving generously, and doing all the good he can, it is because of the Resurrection of Jesus. Because Christ has risen He has not only been able to proclaim by the mouth of Apostles and Evangelists who have written the records of His Life how unselfish and good He was, so that we should imitate him, just as we might imitate the life and character of any other good man; but He has risen to impart that very goodness to us, one by one, by the power of His Spirit given in consequence of His own Resurrection. When you see the Christian forbearing and forgiving, making peace, composing differences, making allowances, giving way in little things, even living for and praying for His enemies, you see, in very deed, the fruits of the Resurrection of Christ. He was all this. This was the Life of God in Him, and He rose again in order that by the power of His Resurrection, and through the means of His appointing, all this and every other grace and virtue which is the fruit of the Life of God dwelling in a creature may be in the souls of all of us.

It is because of this that St. Paul desired so earnestly that he might "know Christ and the power of His resurrection,"—because of this

he speaks of so continually bearing about in the body the dying of his Lord, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in his body. Such wondrous words are unintelligible until we know that we live the life of God, not merely by imitating the virtues and graces, but by having within us the communication of the very Life itself, of the Son of God.

He has gone, but He has left with us tokens and pledges of His continued presence. Not a presence so that we should see His face now that He is in glory;—one in flesh and blood saw That but for a moment, and was utterly blinded; another saw It, and fell down as one dead;—but a presence so that we should now have within us His mind, His will, His character, His spiritual and eternal life. More even than this: a presence of His Body for the eternal life of these our mortal bodies according to His gracious engagement: “He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

III.

GOD'S DRAWING.

JOHN vi. 44.

"No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

THE Church, as you well know, beloved, brings before us during this week all that the Scriptures reveal to us of the bitter sufferings by which Jesus redeemed us.

It may, by God's blessing, be profitable for us to consider on this Sunday a question which doubtless we have often asked, and have as often answered. Why are the sufferings of Jesus thus set down in the pages of the Word of God, and set forth, at this season especially, in the Eucharistic services of the Church? Some would have us believe that they are set forth in order that we may learn from the fortitude and patience of the Divine Sufferer a lesson of resignation to the will of God. And of course there is a partial truth in this, though it is miserably short of the fulness of the truth; for we pray daily during this week that as "Almighty God has sent His Son to take upon Him our flesh and to suffer death upon the

cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility, so we may follow the example of His patience." Others will tell us that it is to establish or increase our faith in His atonement; but the atonement which He wrought out would have been equally perfect had the circumstances of His sufferings been withheld from us, or at least not recorded with such fulness. Others again speak as if the account of these sufferings had been given to us mainly to assure us of the wrath of God against sin, seeing that sin could not be expiated except at such a cost of bitter grief of mind and body, endured by God's own Son in our nature. But we must beware exceedingly lest we make God the real author of that sin of the rulers and people of Israel, which He yet undoubtedly overruled to bring about His purposes of mercy to us. But undoubtedly, the chief reason why so much is said of these sufferings of Jesus is to draw us to Him Who endured all these things for us. The wondrous story of Jesus, agonised, betrayed, denied, rejected, mocked, scourged, and crucified, is all written to draw us to Him. Whatever other purposes the accounts are written to serve, and they serve many, this is *the* purpose: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." And those whom He draws He draws by the exhibition of His great love.

Now let us, God helping, look to this drawing.

One of the most remarkable assumptions respecting Himself which the meek and lowly Man of Sorrows was ever making, was that He was in Himself—rather perhaps that He was Himself—the remedy for all the evils, temporal and spiritual, which His fellow-creatures suffer. He was to be the remedy for their sin, for His name of Jesus was given to Him because He would save His people from sin. He was to be the remedy for all the consequences of their sin, as for instance, their enmity to God, because He would reconcile them to God. He was to be the remedy for their blindness and darkness, for He is the Light. He was the remedy for their separation from God, for He is the Way, the Door, the Bringer into the Divine Presence. He was to be the remedy for their falsehood, their false notions both about God and themselves, for He is the Truth. He was to be the Satisfier of their hunger, the most crying want of their nature, for His Flesh is Meat indeed. He was to be the remedy for Death itself, the last enemy—for He is the Life.

But, following on all this, the meek and lowly Man of Sorrows set forth, that though He was all this in Himself, yet that all men must be brought to feel their need of Him, and have personal intercourse with Him for the supply of their need. This intercourse with Him by applying to Him, this personally having to do with Him, He calls, “coming to

Him." He upbraids His own people with their obstinate wilful blindness to this: "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." "Come unto Me," He calls aloud to every sin-laden child of Adam, "come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Even though He was about to leave this world and ascend up to Heaven and sit on the Right Hand of God, far above, out of the world's sight, that was to make no difference; nay rather, if this should be, it would be easier to come to Him, and to have to do with Him; far easier than if He had lingered on earth on a throne in Jerusalem. For if He had remained on earth we should have had to cross land and sea to come to Him. Now we know by His Ascension that we have to come to Him by sincere and repeated acts of faith and love and prayer and Eucharist.

'Coming' to Him, is addressing Him by prayer in the faith of His omnipresent power and Godhead. It is also invoking His intercession in the faith of His promise, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you." "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, I will do it;" and this that we may have pardon, peace, grace to forsake sin, and strength to resist its attacks, and the truth of God in our hearts and on our lips.

And now we come to a very hard and deep thing in these words of Christ, which is, I

need scarcely say, the limitation which our Lord assigns to the power of the attraction of His Cross. "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent Me draw Him." Elsewhere His invitations to come to Him are as universal as possible. "Come unto Me *all* ye that labour and are heavy laden." And He sorrowfully upbraids those who will not come. "Ye will not come to Me that ye may have life." And He even weeps over those who will not come. "How often would I have gathered thy children together . . . and ye would not." "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace."

Surely these words imply the utmost desire and longing of the holy Jesus for the salvation of souls. Does God then draw all? If He draws all, how is it that all do not come?

It is not too much to say, your own hearts and consciences will bear witness to its truth, that there are numbers before me who have not, and do not, come to Christ in any way or for any purpose. If God then is drawing you, you are determinedly and perseveringly resisting His drawing. If He is not drawing you, how can we account for such unbounded offers of grace, such calls to all who hear, such a "compelling to come in"?

Now, of course, all this borders upon, rather it is in itself, the most secret thing of the Lord our God, and it cannot be explained. Some do

not even desire any explanation. They are content to regard the just God as a respecter of persons, loving some for no reason but a blind will, and hating a far greater number of His own creatures for no other reason than the same mere sovereign will—hating them, too, from all eternity, before they were even in being, and hating them to the extent of condemning them from all eternity to everlasting torments in unquenchable fire. The enunciation of this makes others say, “We do not care for such a God; we cannot love Him, and we will not believe in His existence;” or else they say, “If I am not drawn, and so if I continue in sin and in the bondage of the world, it is not my fault.”

Now, I do not say that all the difficulty, but I do say that very much of the difficulty which a fair and candid mind has in regarding God as a just God, and yet in accepting these words of the loving Jesus—very much of the difficulty, I say, is removed by simply considering *how* God draws the soul to Him. Remember, that amongst men, who have nothing like the resources at their disposal which God has at His, there are very different ways of drawing persons and things. You draw a heavy stone towards you by the application of mere brute force. You would draw an animal to you by offering to it some of its wonted food. You would draw a child to you by offering it a toy or some sweet

thing, or by opening your arms to it. You remember, I doubt not, the engraving of the little child on the edge of the dangerous precipice, and the agonised mother baring her breast to entice the little one away, for its very next step would be death.

Again, the bad draw others bad like themselves to serve their purposes by tempting them, bribing them, or flattering them ; and the virtuous and good draw others unconsciously to them by the exhibition of what is holy and good in themselves or in those around them.

Now, in ways corresponding to these, God draws souls to Himself and to His Son. "I will draw them," He prophesies by the mouth of one of His prophets, "I will draw them with the cords of a man." When God says this we may reverently assume that He means something like this : "I know their human nature, with all its secret springs, for I made it. I have made them so that heart draws heart, and love begets love, and the sight of distress begets pity, and the sight of suffering virtue moves all within them to righteous indignation, and the sight of patience under what one has inflicted makes that one to burn with indignation against himself. Having made them thus, I will show to them the heart of My dear Son ; how He is so earnest and intent upon saving them that not even the uttermost shame of crucifixion and the agonies of death can turn Him aside

from His purpose of love. I will hold up before their eyes the patience under provocation of Him Who is My express image, and the forgiving love of Him Who is Mine only One, in that He prayed for His tormentors. I will show them His meekness and gentleness, in that He endured the contradiction of sinners; how, when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not. I will reveal to them that all this came to pass by My permission; all foreseen by Me, and its issues fore-ordained by Me, in order that I might reconcile them to Myself, and have regard to the demands of My law, even whilst I show mercy."

Thus does God the Father set the Life, sufferings, and Death of God the Son before us to draw us to Him. But is this all? Is there no unspeakably mysterious action on God's part, or rather, is there not some unspeakably mysterious choice exercised by God, whereby, out of the many who have all this set before them, some only are moved by it to come to Christ? It might be enough to answer, that "secret things belong to the Lord our God," and that there is enough for us in this plain and open declaration, that "He desireth not the death of a sinner," that He "wills all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth," and that He would compel the very outcasts, the dwellers in the highways and hedges, to come in.

But we would rather answer in this way : It will be time to consider the secret thing when we have considered the plain and open thing, and how we are affected by it. The plain and open thing, which God holds out in His Hand as the magnet of love to draw us, is the Cross of Christ. I mean, of course, by the Cross, not the Cross of wood, but the shame and suffering and death of which the Cross was the outward visible sign. I mean, too, the holy, loving life, the life of hardship, of toil in doing good, of patient bearing with the perverseness and unbelief of His chosen ones ; and I mean, too, the life after death, the carrying our nature up to Heaven, and the abiding there to intercede for us. All this, which is the Cross with its antecedents in Nazareth, in Judea, in Jerusalem, in the Temple, in Gethsemane, in the judgment hall, and its issues on the Throne of God — this is the attracting magnet in the hand of God to draw the hearts of sinners.

If then we are not drawn, how is it ? Putting aside, at first, all secret and mysterious reasons, is there not one plain and simple reason, and that is, our own hardness of heart and unbelief ? Our hearts must be in a very ungodly state if they are not drawn Godwards, when God holds all this before us. Now, we are able to judge from ourselves, from what takes place amongst ourselves, as to the moral evil of this. We know well how indignant we should feel if we

were to see some good and honourable man making advances to some one far his inferior—putting himself to much trouble, going through much anxiety, submitting to much opposition, perhaps actually enduring ill-will, and all for the one only purpose of conferring a benefit upon the inferior; and yet the man whom he desires to benefit will have none of it, if he does not spurn it all, is utterly careless about it, keeps out of the way of him who desires his happiness or success, and cannot be persuaded to meet one of his advances. We know, I say, what righteous indignation we should feel if we were to see such a thing. But is not this a true account of matters between God and our souls? God exhibiting His love and mercy in the gift of His Only Son, and the love and forbearance of that Son, in that no provocations could turn Him from His purpose of love, and we turning head and heart away, refusing to be drawn, refusing to come and be made whole, that is, refusing to be made fit for the presence of God. To refer again, for a moment, to the case of the two men which we have supposed. If such a thing came before us in daily life, and doubtless it continually does so in some shape or other, we should certainly not speculate upon any secret power which the benefactor might have of drawing to himself the heart of the person whom he would benefit; much less should we take into account

any secret inability on the part of the man whom he would benefit. It would be enough for us if the superior exhibited all kindness and goodwill calculated to draw out the best feelings of his neighbour, and when his offers are refused we cut the matter short by saying that the churlish person has no good feelings, or in such a case he would certainly have been influenced by them. And must it not be so in the matter of God and ourselves? If we are unattracted by the Cross, unmoved by the loving condescension of Christ, untouched by the record of what He endured for us, ungrateful for redemption, what is the real state of the case? Is it not because our souls are in an *ungodly* state, having nothing of God in them, if such words of God, betokening such love of God, have no power over them? And so it must be. Such a saying as my text does not prove the partiality of God in that He draws some and not others. The true and obvious lesson from it is rather the terrible havoc which sin has made in the heart, in that we can be thus so dead as not to be drawn to God by that which should naturally draw us to Him—even the sufferings and death of Jesus.

But, after all, is it not a hard saying, "No man can come unto Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him?" If we come not to Christ, is it not because we are not drawn?

Wait. There is another consideration which

must be entertained before we come to this. "Christ says, No man can come to Me except My Father draw him." What, then, is our duty? Rather, how should we exercise our common sense? Evidently in *this*, above all things: in praying earnestly to God to draw us. This is the lesson which the great St. Augustine, the first doctor of the Church, who taught systematically the deep mysteries connected with God's calling and election, draws from these words. "Mighty enhancement of grace!" he writes. "No man cometh, unless drawn. Whom He draweth, and whom draweth not, why He draweth one, and draweth not another, wish not thou to judge if thou wish not to err. Once for all take and understand: art thou not drawn? Pray that thou mayest be drawn."

Whether you are within some hidden circle, secret to all but God, you or I cannot tell; but that you are within the sound of Christ's words you are as certain as that you are in existence. Now when these words of Christ first fell on mortal ears they fell on the ears of men all of whom God invited to pray—all of whom God, by the mouth of Jesus, commanded to pray—all of whose prayers God engaged always, and at all times, to hear. When, then, we hear Christ saying, "No man can come to Me except the Father that hath sent Me draw him," our plain duty is, not to speculate, but to respond at once, "Draw me; take away from within me

all that keeps me from Thee: make me to believe, and help mine unbelief." If we are to judge of the Mind of God from the word of God, no prayer can be more acceptable to God than the prayer of the sinner, that he should be able to come to, and abide in, and love, and obey, Christ; for it is a prayer that he should be able effectually to avail himself of that Redemption which God has suffered so much to accomplish, and is so very earnest in pressing upon the acceptance of those for whose sake He wrought it at such a cost. Surely the prayer of a sinner that he may be drawn to the Saviour must be very acceptable to the Father of that Saviour. The prayer that we may love His Son, and believe with all our hearts in what He has done for us, is one which God will assuredly "not cast out."

Another Holy Week is before us. During this week the same wondrous story of the Son of God suffering and dying is proclaimed by the Church. It is the most prominent thing in the Prayer Book, is this whole week of sacred service, setting forth the sufferings of Him into Whom we have been baptized, and by Whom we come to God, and Whom some day we expect to see in glory.

Well, if the power of drawing us be in the hands of God, it is in the hands of One Who has sworn that He desires not the death of a sinner; and so we have but to ask and we shall

be drawn. He will, at our prayer, so remove the stony heart and give the heart of flesh, that our minds will be affected, as they naturally should be, by the exhibition of such love, such patience, such goodness, such wrongs endured at our hands and on our account.

And let our consolation and good hope be from this very thing, that no man can come except he be drawn; for it assures us that if we are conscious of being drawn in the very least degree, it is the work of the Holy Ghost, it is the attraction of God. If, then, we have any drawing towards Christ, let us cherish it as the best gift of God—the best, because it now raises us up to Christ, and, in Him, to all that is right and good; for “a man is drawn to Christ,” as St. Augustine says, “when he delights in truth, delights in blessedness, delights in righteousness, delights in everlasting life—all which Christ is.”

And it is the best gift of God, because it will raise us up at last to the resurrection of life; for Christ not only says, “No man can come unto Me except the father which hath sent Me draw him;” but He also goes on to say, “I will raise that man up at the last day.”

IV.

THE WORKS OF THE SPIRIT.

1 CORINTHIANS xii. 4.

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.”

ON this day, especially set apart by the Church that on it we should glorify God for the gift of the Holy Ghost, it may, by God's blessing, be profitable to consider the number and variety of the gifts or operations of the Holy Ghost set before us in the Scriptures. Many, I believe very many, religious persons, especially those whose religious opinions are not derived from or conformed to the teaching of the Church, seem to realise—indeed to know of—but one operation of the Holy Spirit, His work in instructing or sanctifying the heart. And doubtless, in a sense, this is, to each one, His most important work. It is undoubtedly that work of His, for the due use and cultivation of which we are each individually most responsible. It is that work which, if He work it not within us, all His other gifts or operations will be utterly unavailing. But if we submit our understandings to the teaching of the Spirit as set forth in Scripture, which if we

are effectually led by Him we must do, we shall find that His works are manifold; that many of them are not what the religious world would call *spiritual* works, that they have to do with what is outward and visible, as well as with what is inward and strictly spiritual; as for instance, with the outward organisation as well as with the inward life of the Church; with the outward part as well as with the moral effect of the sacraments; with the present healing and the future resurrection of the body.

The first work of the Spirit which we shall notice we find in the very first page of the inspired word of God: "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." For what purpose he *brooded over*, as the word in the original means, the primeval waters we are not told. It may have been as the Giver of Life, which we confess Him to be in our Creed. Or it may be as the Finger of God to carry into effect the eternal council respecting creation. It is to be remarked that the ancient Fathers, who lived and wrote in the first and purest ages of the Church, see in these words a foreshadowing of the Spirit's work in the sacrament of Baptism. I shall not dwell upon this. I merely now would have you observe that the very first work of the Spirit on record is not strictly a spiritual work. It is an operation performed on lifeless matter, on an element of

the outward creation, and (putting aside all applications of it by way of type or illustration), we should at least learn thus much, that the workings of this Divine Agent are universal and unlimited, and that we can only judge of what are His workings by His own revelation of them in His own Inspired Word.

The next reference to a working of the Spirit of God seems to be found in the sixth chapter of the same book, where we find that God says, with reference to the wicked generation which He cut off by a flood, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." This is also a very important statement, as it teaches that the Holy Spirit may strive for awhile with those who resist Him and are lost in consequence. So that one of the earliest notices of the work of the Spirit seems expressly given to warn men that His work on the heart is not irresistible. Some men—some of the best of men—find a difficulty in believing this. The very strength of their faith in the power and grace of the Spirit indisposes them to believe that His presence can ever be given in vain; but, no truth is more distinctly revealed than that some measure of His influence can be effectually resisted. Indeed the converse of this, when we come fairly to consider it, seems the more incredible view of things; for how could God justly condemn men unless He had first warned them, and convinced them, and in some degree

enlightened them? And these are the most ordinary works of His Spirit.

As my aim at present is to show that the Holy Spirit acts in a great variety of ways for the good of the Church, and so that we cannot be fully conformed to the mind of God unless we enter into all His works on our behalf, I will draw attention to three operations of the Spirit, which we assuredly should not have supposed to have been the works of the Spirit, unless we had had the express declarations of Scripture that such they were. When God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt it was His will that they should offer to Him His ordained worship of sacrifice and burnt offering in a costly and elaborate tabernacle, made exactly according to a pattern which He showed to them. How was this to be, seeing that the children of Israel had been, till the moment of their deliverance, slaves, drudging at the lowest form of manual labour, and there was not, in all probability, one skilled workman among them? God, in this time of need, raised up a man to do this work, and in order to qualify him it is expressly stated that He gave to him His Holy Spirit. "See," He says (Exod. xxxi. 2—5), "*I have called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, . . . and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in*

gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship." Here you observe that God gives to this man His Spirit, not to convert him or to sanctify him; there is not a word said about this, though we would hope that the gifts of cleansing and illumination respecting the things of God would be given together with the power to design and to plan and to execute carved work; but God gives to this man His Spirit to fit him to build a tabernacle exactly according to a certain pattern; this tabernacle to be the perpetual centre of the only God-ordained ritual then in existence.

Here let me say a word, in passing, upon what I cannot but think to be a very legitimate inference from this last example. We have inherited from our fathers a style of sacred architecture which, beyond all else that has ever been devised by man, seems to lift the soul above itself, to solemnise it, to chase away from it, for the time at least, thoughts of earth, and to fill it with thoughts of heaven. As one has well said, "A church (built on these principles) represents indeed the beauty, the loftiness, the calmness, the mystery, and the sanctity of religion, and that in many ways; still I will say, more than all these, it represents to us its eternity."*

* Hawthorne, in 'Our Old Home.'

Now, whence came this glorious embodiment of religious thought, and reverence, and devotion? Is it of the earth, earthy? Can that be of earth which inspires such heavenly emotions? Is it not truer to say with him whose words I have just quoted: "All that is so noble in their architecture, all that captivates the eye, and makes its way to the heart, is not a human imagination, but a Divine gift, a moral result, a spiritual work?"

Well, then, if God gave to this Bezaleel no less a gift than His Spirit to enable him to devise, and to execute aright for the erection and adornment of a tabernacle, all whose furniture and arrangements were but shadows of the good things set forth in our worship, must not the conceptions of an architecture so sublime, reverential, and withal so Christian, as the architecture of our old churches, have been, in its whole conception, the inspiration of the same Spirit?

If it be argued that these glorious structures come down to us from ages of ignorance and superstition, I answer, that the lower you pitch the spirituality of those who devised this architecture, and erected these buildings, the more needful it is to answer the question, "Whence came such elevating and spiritualising conceptions into human art"? I would fain hope, however, that they who could plan houses of God which so lift our souls to God, had more

of God in them than some of us are apt to give them credit for. I am only too thankful to be able to think that the walls, and roofs, and arches, and windows, and spires of these houses of God, must have silently preached to multitudes among them the Eternity and Unchangeableness and Mystery of Him Who was the supreme object of their worship.

But we must proceed to our next instance. It is that of Balaam, who was endowed by the Spirit of God with the gift of prophecy. Balaam was a bad man, and died the death of a covetous reprobate. He it was who enticed the Children of Israel to commit sin in order that they might lose the favour of God, though he knew perfectly that they were the Church and People of God. He, to all appearance, died in his sin, for he was slain in the camp of the enemies of God's people; and yet we find that the Spirit of God *came upon him*, and he prophesied of the glories of the future Kingdom of Christ. He it was who prayed, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." He it was who taught Balak that God required of him "to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with God." By Balaam's example, we learn this fearful lesson, that the illuminating influences of the Spirit are not inseparable from the sanctifying. The Spirit may illuminate the understanding, and yet the will may rebel against Him, and so

prevent Him from sanctifying the heart. The same thing seems to be taught us by the history of Saul. Of Saul it is said more than once that the Spirit of God came upon him and he prophesied; and yet we are told respecting him that "the Spirit of the Lord" (evidently because of his sins) "departed from him, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him."

An instance far more confounding to all our preconceived notions of the works of the Spirit we have in the case of Sampson, in the Book of Judges. We read that the bodily strength of Sampson was a gift of the Spirit, and more than this, was a consequence of the Spirit Himself coming upon Sampson. When he exerted his wondrous strength of body, it was said that the "Spirit of God came upon him," and when he was weak as other men, it was because the "Spirit of God had departed from him."

Now, why do I bring forward these instances? Solely for the purpose of showing you that the works of the Spirit, even under the Old Testament, are manifold; and that even on the same man He may work in one way, and for some purposes, and withhold His working for higher ends of grace.

He bestowed on Balaam the gift of prophecy, and yet Balaam died a covetous reprobate. He worked in Bezaleel what would make him a skilful artisan, or a designer of the most fitting form and decorations of a material building. And He

even condescended to work in the body of Sampson strength of limb and nerve for the deliverance of God's people.

We now come to that Testament to which the Book from which we have gathered these instances is but an introduction. The first instance in the New Testament of a work of the Spirit is the greatest work of God that the mind of man or angel can contemplate, for it is the Incarnation of the Eternal Son. "Fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." The greatest work of God conceivable, for no instance that God has given to us of any working of His power can come near to this, that a human nature should be created out of the flesh of a woman, and in the act of its being brought into existence should be so personally and indissolubly united to the Eternal Son of God, that God and man should be One Christ, and that in One "formed in fashion as a man" should dwell the fulness of the Godhead; so that the Infinite and the Finite, the Infinite nature and perfection of God and the finite nature of man, should meet and be one in One Person, in the Person of Him Who was in the fulness of time born of

the Virgin Mary. So that the Eternal Son of the Most High, Who, till that time, had acted only as God acts, should, from that time, act through the human nature which He had assumed.

I cannot further dwell on this. I would have you, however, realise this, that this first and greatest work of the Spirit is not what men would call a strictly spiritual work. It is a work on flesh, and in the region of the flesh, as well as in the soul and spirit. It is God assuming, by the power of the Holy Ghost, the flesh of the creature.

The next work of the Holy Ghost that we read of is at the Baptism of Christ. The Holy Spirit then descended upon Him to anoint Him as the Christ, or anointed Priest, Prophet, and King of His people. All ministerial prerogative, all orders and functions of ministry, were, at the first, the gift of the Spirit. So we cannot but gather from the words of St. Paul: "He ascended up far above all heavens . . . that He might give gifts unto men;" and these gifts were "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers." So that all true priesthood, as well as all true prophecy, is His gift. And as it is with us so with our Head. He at His Baptism was set apart for His work by the Holy Ghost. And it was by the Spirit that He performed His miracles, such as the casting out of devils, of which miracle He expressly

says, "If I by the finger of God or by the Spirit of God, cast out devils, no doubt the Kingdom of God is come unto you." It would seem from this that when He emptied Himself (Phil. ii. 7, *ἐκένωσε*) He laid aside the exercise of His own inherent power as the Eternal Son, and condescended to do His mighty works by the power of the same Spirit by which His servants do them.

We find that our Lord's sacrifice on the Cross was prepared and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, for "by the Eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God."

Again, we read that it was by the Holy Ghost that He was even raised from the dead. (Rom. i. 3, compared with viii. 11.)

So that in fact the Holy Ghost was co-operating in the whole work of Redemption from first to last.

Well, the Lord promised that shortly after His Ascension He would send down this Spirit of His Father and of Himself, and this promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. There was then, as there had been at the baptism of Christ, an outward visible sign of His presence. As a bodily shape like a dove had descended on the head of Christ, so cloven tongues like as of fire descended and sat upon each of the Apostles. Then began that dispensation of the Spirit in which we are now living.

What, my brethren, was the first work of the

Holy Ghost in this last and perfecting unfolding of God's purposes? It was not assuredly what (if we desire to conform our language to the religious phraseology current around us) we should call a spiritual work at all. It was rather an intellectual one. It was the gift of tongues. In one moment the knowledge of the words of languages which they had never before heard was poured into the minds of the Apostles; and along with this there must have been given to them the power to use these words aright, to join them together in their due combinations or idioms, and to pronounce them correctly; for the mere knowledge of the names of things would have been useless unless they had also the power of combining them in intelligible sentences.

After this we find that the Holy Ghost, all through the Acts of the Apostles, is represented as exercising a personal control over, and government of, the Church. Thus, when the time came for St. Paul to be consecrated to the exercise of the Apostolic office to which Christ Himself had designated him, we read that the Holy Spirit said to certain prophets and teachers as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul to the work whereunto I have called them." Again, we find that in St. Paul's second journey his own will was overruled as to the line of operations he should take. "He was forbidden by the

Holy Ghost to preach in Asia." "He assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit," i.e., the Holy Ghost, "suffered him not." So then, if we are to be guided in our belief by the Acts of the Apostles, one work of the Holy Spirit is the superintendence and direction of the Church—at least so it was in the first age. So fully did this presence pervade all its organisation, that they who attempted to deceive the Church in its heads or chief ministers are said to have "lied, not unto man, but unto God."

We now come to the Apostolical Epistles, and here one reference will suffice for our particular purpose in this sermon. In his first letter to the Corinthians we have the Apostle formally treating of the gifts of the Spirit. "Now concerning Spiritual gifts," he says, "I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." We gather from this that not merely the highest graces of advanced Christians, but that the whole Christianity of the early converts, in the widest sense of the term, was the work of the Spirit. Christianity on the one side, and its opposite heathenism or Judaism, on the other, are contrasted. Heathenism was in the broadest sense of the word the

worship of idols. The unconverted Jew, by the fact of his continuing a Jew without becoming a Christian, held Christ to be an impostor; he called Him accursed, and, on the other hand, the merest nominal believer, who accepted Christ at all, called Him "Lord;" so that the very profession of outward Christianity, the mere holding of the broad verities of the Creed, was a work of the Spirit. Well, the Apostle proceeds, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit;" and again, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to *every man* to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom;" and then he proceeds to enumerate, as works or operations of the Spirit, knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, divers kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. And then he asserts that the Spirit, in working these, acts, not as a mere influence of good, but as an active personal agent, having a will, a distinct individual will, leading Him to give to one and to withhold from another what He in His wisdom thinks fit in each case. And lest we should think that He, the Blessed Spirit, was sparing in the distribution of his gifts, the Apostle asserts that the whole body, and all its several members, partake of, at least, one gift, and that is the baptismal gift of incorporation into Christ's body. "As the body," he says, "is one, and hath many members, and

all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ; for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

One other work of the Spirit yet remains, which I can only notice, and I notice it because it too is not what many would call a spiritual work; and yet it is unquestionably the completion of our Redemption. It is the Resurrection of the Body. As the Apostle tells us, "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit which dwelleth in you."

Such then are the operations of the Spirit. So far from being one only, i.e., His work in enlightening the heart with the knowledge of sin and of the Saviour, they are manifold indeed. Everything in Christianity, as it came forth fresh from the hands of its Founder, seems to be treated in Scripture as an act of the Spirit. The Church, with its various ministers and officers, its organisation, its faith once delivered to the saints, and of course whatsoever insures its continuity, is the creation of the Holy Ghost. The sacraments are the instruments of the Spirit, whereby He grafts us into the mystical Body of Him Who is now at the right hand of God, or assures to the believing soul its continuance in that blessed Fellowship.

The Bible, both Old and New Testament, is the inspiration of Him Who spake by the prophets. Every separate act of God upon the Christian, from the first faint glimmer of faith in his heart to the raising of his mortal body at the general Resurrection—all are works of the Spirit. Even what we call nominal Christianity—the profession in a world like this of the name of a crucified Redeemer—is kept up in the world by the Spirit of God.

It is well, I think, on a day like this, that all this should be pressed upon you; if for no other reason, to show you how very much you have to do with the Spirit of God. Do not then for a moment entertain the idea that the gift of the Spirit is confined to some Christians who seem to be converted, and to have a clear view of the doctrines of grace, and some seriousness of demeanour. The whole history of God's ancient people is a history of resistance to God's Spirit, if St. Stephen is to be believed; for he said, and he was full of the Holy Ghost when he said it, "Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do alway resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye."

You suppose that as yet you cannot have resisted the Spirit, for you have had little or nothing to do with Him and His presence and influences. But are you baptized? If so, by Him you have been grafted into the one mys-

tical fellowship. Have you a Bible? It is the work of the Spirit. Are you under bishops, pastors, and teachers? The Bible teaches you that these are gifts of the Spirit. But here you perhaps make an objection. They teach different things, you say; they do not all speak the same thing; and they speak imperfectly, uninvitingly, perhaps erroneously. Well, but have you listened to the truths which they all say alike? Had you listened faithfully and honestly to those truths which you acknowledge to be God's truth, God would, most probably, have put you into the way of obtaining further truth.

You see I make no mention of internal convictions; of drawings of the heart to God; of misgivings as to your state; of glimpses, however faint, of the beauty of holiness, the love of Christ, and the powers and glories of the world to come. I cannot read your heart, but I judge you by what I know of others, and I firmly believe you are not without these. And if you have these, you have what should make you give God no rest till the fruit of the Spirit abounds in you, and that fruit is "in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth."

V.

THE CONVICTION OF THE SPIRIT.

JOHN xvi. 8—11.

“And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”

THIS is a difficult passage of Scripture; so difficult that I have never yet seen any explanation which leaves nothing to be desired, and in all respects commends itself to the mind of the sincere inquirer. And yet some attempt should be made to apply and explain this passage; for year after year we read it from the altar on the fourth Sunday after Easter; and when a difficult passage is thus read once a year in the most solemn worship, it seems unreasonable to pass it over, as if it were either too hard for our congregations to understand, or its meaning so easy and obvious that it contained its own explanation in itself.

The difficulty to which I allude is not, of course, in the three degrees of conviction wrought by the Holy Ghost, but in the grounds brought forward by the Saviour, on which the Holy Spirit works in the mind of the world the

two latter convictions, viz., of "righteousness, and of judgment." We are very familiar with the application of the Spirit's first work of conviction, but by no means so familiar with that of the second, "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see Me no more," and still less with that of the third, "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." How was it that the world was convinced of righteousness because it saw Christ no more? How and when was the prince of this world judged, and how did the Holy Spirit, by Satan's condemnation, convince the world of "judgment"?

Now the difficulty of these words to us arises, not from anything, I think, in the words themselves, but from the almost utter impossibility of our realising the state of knowledge of the twelve men to whom they were spoken. From our youth up we have been accustomed to confess the name of Jesus to be "the name that is above every name." Weekly at least—many of us daily, have praised Him as "the King of Glory, as the Everlasting Son of the Father, Who, when He had overcome the sharpness of death, threw open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." When we call to mind His death upon the cross, though we *know* that it was a death of shame, yet we can hardly believe it, with such glory is that Death now invested as the one full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice,

oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

Now it will be needful for us to divest ourselves in a manner of these our most familiar religious thoughts and feelings respecting the death of Christ, if we would hope to enter into the force of the words of the text, in which Christ would comfort the Twelve at the near prospect of His departure, and their seeming desertion or state of orphanhood. The death of their Master, so far from being regarded by them at this time as the all-prevailing propitiation, was to them the extinction of every hope. It was undoubtedly so to the very foremost among them, one to whom God Himself had taught the Messiahship of His Son; for when Peter was told by His Master that He must be delivered to death, his answer was, "Be it far from Thee, Lord. This shall not be unto Thee."

That same Jesus, whom we now believe to be our Lord and our God, our Redeemer and our Judge, was then "on His trial." I do not mean before His enemies, which He was literally to be in the space of a few hours, but before His Apostles, His own chosen ones. He was on His trial as to whether He was in very deed all that He had claimed to be.

He had claimed to be the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. All His mighty works and words of grace testified to the truth of His claims; but the heads of the religion

of Israel, the men who sat in Moses' seat, and who on that account, in the view of Christ Himself, were entitled to the obedience of their co-religionists (Matthew xxiii. 2)—these men had rejected His claims, and refused the evidence of His miracles. The religious world of the day believed not. Well, the very Apostles must have been staggered by such a rejection of their Master, and the more devotedly they were attached to the religion of their fathers, the more must they have questioned in their hearts "Can this be the Christ, if our priests and elders, the heads of our Church, believe not on Him?"

But He laid a still greater burden on their faith. He told the Twelve, who had been but a very little before so carnal in their views of His Kingdom that they had disputed which should be the greatest, that the world would hate them; that it would persecute them; and He meant by the world, not the heathen world, but the world which professed the religion of the One true God. "They shall put you," He says, "out of the *synagogues*;" meaning by this that the chief priests of His Father's worship should excommunicate them. "Yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you shall think that he doeth God service." But, worse than all, they were to be without His presence in these sufferings. He Who had been as yet their stay and support, Who had always attracted to His

own Person the malice of their enemies, He was to be removed. "Now I go my way to Him that sent me;" "I leave the world and go to the Father." And because of these foretellings of His departure, as we should have expected, "sorrow filled their hearts."

What consolation did He give them under all this? It was the promise that He would send Another Comforter, by Whom He would be present with them, and cheer them and sustain them, far more effectually than if He had remained in their midst.

"I will not leave you comfortless," or orphans, as it should be rendered; "I will come to you." I will come to you, that is, in power, because in the Spirit. And the name given throughout this discourse to the Holy Spirit, the word translated in our Bibles "Comforter" means, as any commentator will show you, advocate, or helper, or patron, and has reference rather to the external or outward advocacy of the cause of Christ and of His Apostles, than to the internal secret consolation which He affords. It is then as if Christ said, "I have hitherto pleaded the cause of My truth and shall plead it, and protect you who are identified with it, till I go away; but be not sorrowful or cast down at the thought of my departure, for I go that another Advocate may come and plead for the cause I leave in your hands. Hitherto the world has not believed in

Me. It has rejected the evidence of My claims; and ye have wavered because of its unbelief. I have condemned the world, and the world in its turn will condemn Me of sin, and will put Me to death as a sinner. This coming Advocate will convince the world 'of sin' because of this very rejection of My claims. They who have condemned Me and crucified Me shall be pricked to the heart; because they have killed the Prince of Life, and desired a murderer to be granted unto them. Through the pleading of this Advocate they shall repent, they shall ask what they are to do; they shall look on Me Whom they have pierced. And ye are afraid, because I go away and am no more seen; and the world will rejoice because they think that they have made an end of Me. But by this very thing—by My continued absence in Heaven, out of the sight of the world,—the coming Advocate shall establish My righteousness, even to the world. As the Prophet says, 'The heavens shall declare My righteousness unto the people that shall be born, whom the Lord hath made'—unto the new creation of God. Because I shall be exalted to the right hand of God I shall openly vindicate My truth by pouring down what men shall see and hear. The Holy Spirit of Righteousness Whom I will rain down shall give proof before all men, by the words which He shall put into your lips, and by the mighty works, mightier even

than Mine, which He shall enable you to perform, that in My Life and Death I am accepted and approved by the Father. When the Gift which I now promise is given, and it cannot be given till I am seen no more, then shall ye indeed know that I am the Righteous One, that My righteousness is accepted by My Father, on My own and on My Church's behalf. Then shall the same Spirit teach men that My person is the only source, and My example the only standard, of the righteousness of God."

But our Lord goes on to say, "of judgment," that is, He, the Holy Spirit, shall convince the world "of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."

How and when was Satan judged, and how was the judgment executed upon him the conviction of judgment to the world? This it is which forms the real difficulty of this wonderful passage. We cannot hope to understand how the world was convinced of judgment because Satan was judged, unless we can in some degree realise the nature of the judgment which was passed upon him. All our ideas of judgment are so intimately connected with that final judgment for which we know that Satan is reserved, that we are scarcely able to realise what a judgment was passed upon him, and what a blow was given to his power by the setting up of the Church of Christ. In the view of our Blessed Lord, that is, in the view of

Him to whom all things, seen and unseen, are naked and open, there was evidently a judgment passed, and executed, upon Satan, when our Lord redeemed mankind ; for Christ, a little before this, when God witnessed to Him by a voice from Heaven, had exclaimed, " Now is the judgment of this world ; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." The incident which led to this witness to Jesus by the voice of His Father will give us, I think, the true key to the meaning of this third conviction. Certain Greeks, who had come to worship at the feast, had asked to see Jesus. These, of course, were not Jews who used the Greek tongue, but Gentiles by birth, who had become proselytes of the gate. The anxiety of these Greeks to see Him was interpreted by Jesus as a sign of the speedy subjugation of the world to the power of His cross, and, if so, to the dethronement and casting out of the prince of this world. " Now," He says, " is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out, and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." A learned German (Stier) remarks : " These men from the West, at the end of the life of Jesus, set forth the same as the Magi from the East, at its beginning ; but they come to the cross of the King, as those to His cradle." The word in the original for prince is " ruler" (*αρχων*).

The ruler is judged and condemned when his rule is threatened and shaken in token of its final destruction, and the earnest desire to see Jesus on the part of these Greeks was a token of the breaking up of idolatry, and the breaking down of the barrier which, till then, shut out the world from the house and family of God.

And this may not have been all. It is evident from many dark sayings and hints to be found in various parts of God's Word, that at the very moment of the Ascension some signal personal discomfiture of Satan took place. When our Lord ascended up on high He "led captivity captive" ere He "received gifts for men." Again,—perhaps with reference to the same triumph,—“Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them.” But this, whatever it was, the world saw not. The worlds of spirits saw and rejoiced in it, or trembled when they beheld it; but the world, which needed conviction of judgment, saw it not.

To satisfy our Lord's promise, “He shall convince the world of judgment, because the power of this world is judged,” there must have been a casting down of Satan's power in this world of sight and sense, answering to the triumph of Christ in the unseen world.

And so there was, only we can hardly realise the greatness of this triumph, and the pledge

which it contained of still further discomfiture ; because it is difficult for us, certainly for ordinary uneducated readers of the Bible, to realise the state of things then existing. To realise the universality and strength of the moral and spiritual rule of Satan, we must remember that the only way of raising a man above time and sense and self is His religion. His religion is the light within him. Now if the light within a man be darkness, how great is that darkness ! Conceive then what must have been the power of evil in a world where the very gods which men worshipped were the actual impersonations of sin, the impersonations of lust and impurity, and drunkenness and self-indulgence, and fraud and revenge ; and when the ideas of an hereafter, instead of having power in any way to counteract this, were but the vague distorted images of a dream.

That the powers of a spiritual being, who had the world's religion, and its philosophy, and its kings, and even the rulers and priests of the nominal people of God, at his feet,—that such a power as this should begin to crumble before the preaching of such weak instruments as the Twelve, and the few whom they converted, was a manifest token that judgment should be finally executed on God's enemy.

But this, it is right to say, does not meet all the requirements of our Lord's promise. He engages that the Spirit shall convince the

world of judgment; not, you see, the people of God, or the Apostles and their followers, but the *world*. Now the world knew not that it was under the power of God's enemy, for the heathen world neither knew God nor His enemy. The Apostles knew all; and so when Christ had ascended, and given to them the power which He had promised, that they should tread on all the power of the enemy, then, in the hottest scenes of their conflict, they would take courage; for they would be conscious that they were contending with a foe whom their Master had judged, and that He had promised that they also should judge him; for a part of the glory promised to them was, that they should "judge angels." And so they would "be of good cheer," knowing that He had overcome the world and its prince. But how would the *world* be convinced of judgment, by the judgment on a prince of whose personal existence it was unconscious?

In some such way as this. The triumph of the Cross has restored to the world its conscience. The world now, though it may not obey its conscience, has a conscience. We have had a proof of this in the events of the last few weeks. Two of the greatest powers of this world—two irresponsible independent sovereign powers—before they rush into war, set before the world the vindication of the purity of their motives. They publish manifestoes acknowledging that

there must be guilt in unprovoked and aggressive war, and both plead that they are on the defensive, and that they wage war in the interests of peace and civilisation.

Again, the very world, as the world, whilst it professes to ignore the dogmas, yet forms and builds its laws and ordinances in a great degree upon the morality of the Gospel.

Now, it may be said, that all this is very partial and imperfect; that the world is yet at enmity with God, and that the Church itself has been too often leavened by the spirit of the world; but I answer, that though the judgment upon the evil power of this world has been as yet imperfect, yet that it has been sufficient to show the world itself that at some future time it will be more perfect.

The world, if we may judge from the words of those who have some right and title to speak in its name, professes to believe in a Moral Governor, Who, by some process or other, will reward every man according to his works; and it is a mighty change that has come on the world that it should confess this—a mighty change indeed in the eyes of those who know most of the state of the world before the coming down of the Holy Ghost. Conceive, my brethren, the greatest senate of ancient times debating about the punishment of some great criminals, and decreeing that it was too merciful to put them to death, as death was the acknowledged

termination of all existence, and therefore, of all sense of pain and disgrace, as well as of happiness and honour !

But, when all this has been said, we still, I think, should have thought it more to the purpose if our Lord had said that the Church, rather than the world, was to be convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment. It is hard to believe that the world, for instance, has ever been convinced of sin. When a man belonging to the world has had sin brought home to him he has ceased to be of the world and become "of God."

Now, the fitness of our Lord's language will not be apparent to us nor its meaning clear till we are able to throw ourselves as far as possible into the condition of those whom His words were intended to comfort, that is, till we realise how utterly alone that little band was in its contest with the world. The Church was then a very small company indeed, and every other living man belonged to the world. The Church was not then the spreading tree under whose shadow the kings of the earth had taken refuge ; but the grain of mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, before it had germinated and put forth one single shoot.

When then, after the day of Pentecost, the Spirit was poured from on high, and first three thousand, then two thousand more, then a multitude of priests, were obedient to the faith,

and then its chief enemy, the man exceedingly mad against it, was converted, and became its chief propagator, and planted its branches in every part of the world, was not all this the gathering in of the world in its first fruits? Was it not the stone cut out without hands, swelling visibly into the mountain, and filling the earth?

In this most remarkable saying of Christ's, then, we have the work of the Holy Spirit on the world.

But the world is, after all, but the aggregate of individual souls, and the work of the Spirit on the world is the sum of His working on single souls severally, one by one, as they pass through the world on their way to Eternity. What then, Christ says of the more general work of the Spirit, we, as His ministers, must strive to bring home to each man, so that each one may know whether he is the recipient of the Spirit's work, or rather, whether he is submitting to it. It is the work of the Spirit of God, then, to bring home to a man his sin; and this, not only by making him feel that he has in numberless ways left undone what he ought to have done, and done what he ought not to have done, that he has disgraced his Christian profession, and broken his baptismal vows, but in making a man feel that he has been indifferent to, and willingly unmindful of, the remedy for sin which God has set before us in

the Gospel : “ of sin, because they believe not in Me.” But you may say, Do we not all believe in Him, for have we not all been brought up in His faith ? In a sense you do so believe, but not in a degree sufficient to purify the heart and knit the soul to the Saviour, unless you have consciously come to Him and yourselves accepted, and acted upon, such invitations as : “ Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “ I,” He says, “ if I be lifted up will draw all men unto Me.” You must have been drawn to Him if you have truly and effectually believed in Him.

Again, it is the work of God’s Spirit to bring home to a man righteousness, and on the very ground which our Lord mentions in the text : because He goes to His Father and men see Him no more.

The man who is under the teaching of God’s Spirit will be convinced of righteousness, what it is, and where it is to be found. What it is ; having the mind, and walking in the steps of Christ ; being like Him, humble, kind, gentle, considerate, yet courageous on God’s side ; forgiving, pure, peaceable, prayerful, temperate, truthful, just, sincere, open-hearted, sober, serious in God’s service, jealous of God’s honour, contented and submissive, knowing that God orders all things for the best. And where to seek all this ? At God’s right hand, where Christ is head over all, according to the words of

Christ: "of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;" and of His servant, "Ye are dead and your life," i.e., your spiritual life, "is hid with Christ in God." The Spirit shows the man whom He convinces of righteousness that Christ is the Life of his soul, the fountain and spring of the living water which makes it bear fruit unto God; and to Him Who has gone to His Father and Whom men see no more, the man comes and seeks righteousness, which is not so much an external robe thrown over him, as a new nature worked within him.

And the Spirit convinces a man of judgment, because in his own case the prince of this world is judged. What well-grounded hope has a Christian now that he shall rise to a joyful resurrection—that he shall stand in the Judgment? This one: that he now overcomes the world and its prince. Satan is dethroned in him, his power over him is broken. The Holy Spirit brings home to the Christian the realities of the great day, and yet so that he can bear to think of it, even look for it, because of Him Who will then come. He Who will then come has already begun a good work in him; has already begun to beat down Satan under his feet, and the Christian looks for His coming, even though it will be for judgment, because He will then make perfect the deliverance He has begun to work in His servant.

The prince of this world who once held him captive at his will has less and less in him, and when he is perfect will have *nothing* in him; for he shall be as his Master, Who said, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me."

VI.

CHRISTIAN SERIOUSNESS.

ROMANS viii. 22.

“We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

IF any one of us were to have a Bible put into his hands for the first time, and were asked what was his impression of its tone, so to speak, or of its pervading spirit, as distinguished from the tone or pervading spirit of all other ancient literature which has come down to us—I mean, of course, all other literature which has not been written under the direct, or even indirect influence of the Bible—I think such a one would at once and unhesitatingly answer, “Its extreme seriousness.” From beginning to end it has not only to do with the most serious realities, but it would have all men look at all things whatsoever in the light of these realities. Take the Old Testament. It contains books of history, proverbs, songs, didactic writing (such as Job and Ecclesiastes) written by men very widely differing in their stations, circumstances, and manner of life, and yet each one of these books is permeated by one element—the element of grave earnestness. Take its history.

There are a few chapters upon the general history of the race, and then all the rest has to do with the history of the one people whom God chose to be a peculiar people to Himself; with God's righteous government of them, and with the corrective discipline which by His providence He continually exercised upon them. The rest of the great empires and kingdoms of the world are only mentioned in connection with this providential discipline. The things which now engross the historian—such as the progress of civilisation, the struggles for liberty, the fusion of races, the development of ideas, and such things—are passed over as if they had no existence whatsoever, and as if the only things which were worthy of the slightest notice were those which had to do, in some shape or other, with the direct relations between God and man. Glance over the book in thought and you can have no doubt about this. It begins with the fall of man from a state of original goodness. It speaks of the origin of sacrifice, the rejection of the sacrifice of Cain—that is, the sacrifice without blood—and the acceptance of that of Abel. Then comes the history of the Flood: a visitation which cut off all mankind save one family. Then the history of the chosen seed; God making Himself known to them, even dwelling amongst them; they had His tent or dwelling in the midst of them; they were as much under His special guidance as a

flock of sheep are under the guidance of their particular shepherd. And this gives the meaning to the whole narrative. God was very near to them ; He desired to be nearer still. They were not their own ; God had claimed them, and made good His claim in numberless ways, and so they could not be as the heathen. Unholy though they might be, they never could divest themselves of that relative holiness which consisted in their separation from all other people, by God himself, to be His people ; and so, from all this, their whole condition was one of wonder and awe.

Then look at the history, taken from the first book of Samuel, which we have in the Old Testament lessons for this Sunday. In the first lesson the Israelites are brought before us as changing their form of government. Now what more common than such a thing ? We, living in these days of change, can scarcely take up a newspaper but in it we read of some nation or other either changing their political institutions, or taking steps which must directly lead to some such change. An eminent French diplomatist is said to have, during his lifetime, sworn to observe very nearly twenty different constitutions. All history, in fact, is an account of the various nations of the world either changing their institutions, or so changing themselves that their institutions must suffer some corresponding alteration if the nation in

question is to be governed at all. But here, in our first lesson, we have the Hebrew people desiring the same form of government as all their neighbours had; desiring something of the same outward form of rule, at least, which we have; and it is treated by God's prophet, speaking in the name of God, as little, if at all, short of treason against God. And for this reason, that whilst God had been all along dwelling among them as their King, they desired one who should rule over them as the heathen kings ruled over their subjects, with little or no reference to the peculiar presence and special guidance of God. Because of the intimate relations which God had established between Himself and them, the whole matter wore a totally different aspect to what it would have done had it taken place in Egypt, or Babylon, or Damascus, or Moab.

Well; God hearkened to them, and gave them a king. He knew their hearts, and he chose them just such a king as their hearts desired; of a commanding presence, brave, determined, having much self-command, and, in his better days, noble and generous; but the next chapter gives the account of the fall by which he lost the favour of God. Now, in any other history, the things which led to his being cast away would not have been even mentioned. He neglected to wait till God's special messenger came to offer a sacrifice, and he offered the

sacrifice himself, and he did not strictly obey God's command respecting the destruction of the Amalekites. God, in order to show that the destruction of that wicked race was an act of Divine vengeance, and not undertaken as ordinary human wars and conquests are undertaken, had expressly commanded that no spoil should be taken, but that everything should be utterly destroyed; and this order Saul had failed to observe. For these two acts of disobedience, of which any merely human record would have taken no notice, God rent the kingdom from Saul. So that two matters which in any other history would have been passed over, are, in this God-inspired history, treated as so *serious* that they altered the whole course of events, and brought about a change of dynasty.

Why this? Because of the nearness of God to His people. Saul could not rule Israel as any other monarch might rule a people with whom God had had nothing to do. Saul must rule the people of God as under God, or not at all. If Saul were to rule as independently as any other monarchs ruled, God must throw up His special guidance of His people.

Now we must carry thoughts such as these all through the history of the chosen people, if we would understand that history. Nothing in the narrative is trifling, because God especially dwelt among them in order to fit them for wit-

nessing to Him; to His unity, His holiness, His goodness, and severity.

Again, this chosen people had a book of national odes, or songs; but how inexpressibly unlike the odes or songs of any other country! We have very old songs of all nations, but what are they? Songs glorifying miserable mortals as if they were gods, drinking-songs, polluting, unclean songs, trifling songs; but the very first of the Hebrew national songs runs thus: "Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law will he exercise himself day and night." Now here is a song of human life, but regarded, not in the prospect of the enjoyments or glories of mere human existence, but in the light of God's present favour and future judgment; and so it deals with the only true realities of that life; with the things, that is, which make it an inexpressibly serious matter for intelligent responsible beings to be born into a world of human life, and to live the life of man, and to die, in order that their lives may be reviewed by a just and severe Judge.

And this song of life is, as I said, the first, and it gives the key to all; all else which follows is full of awe and godly fear, and a sense of the nearness and watchfulness of God.

And now we must come to the New Testament. In the first page of its first book we have

the Creator coming among His creatures. We have the Eternal Son of God living amongst us—making His fallen creatures His companions, His friends, so that they should know all His heart. And what view do we gather from the narrative that the Eternal Son took of the state of things into which He had come? Did He take (I use the words with the utmost reverence) a cheerful view of all things around Him? Did He look, as the saying is, at the bright side of things? No, indeed. “Woe unto you that laugh now,” He says, “for ye shall mourn and weep.” “Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God.” “He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake, the same shall find it.” Our Lord once or twice in parable takes up the case of those who took the joyous view of things here below; as for instance, when He describes one who, with evident satisfaction at himself and all around him, said to his soul, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for thee for many years, take thine ease.” And, again, when He speaks of another “clothed in purple and fine linen.” But our Lord’s view of the real state of these men was certainly not such as to make us wish to be like them. If the human life of Christ, as we have it in the Gospels, teaches us any one thing, it teaches us

this: that He, who knew both what was in man and what was in store for him, took the most serious view possible of his state. He evidently looked upon the evils which He had come to remedy, as no surface evils. He evidently regarded the whole condition of His fallen brethren as one deeply needing the unspeakably precious remedy which He had come to bring down to us. And when we consider that that remedy was no other than the utter humiliation in death of Him Who was the Lord of Glory, we can hardly overstate the seriousness of the need. And so the Son of God lived His life amongst us in all grave and sorrowful earnestness of word and deed. He gave His whole energy in life, and then His life in death. With this agrees every notice which we have of Him. It has been often said that we never read of His laughing, or smiling even, but often of His shedding tears. And yet was He joyless? Far, far from it. We read of His "rejoicing in spirit" when the manifest power of God had been put forth on behalf of the mission of those whom He had sent to preach (Luke x. 21). Again, He speaks of His "joy being fulfilled" in His chosen ones. And He speaks words to them in order that "His joy might remain in them, and that their joy might be full." Again, He received as His due the joyful worship of the children. He said that if they ceased to shout their Hosannas to Him

the very stones would cry out. You remember too how He willingly accepted the homage of the breaking of the box of precious ointment on His feet; and yet we never read of His being seen to smile. Nay, more than this; so earnest was His whole life, so precious did He esteem each fragment of that day in which He could work the work of Him that sent Him, that we never once read of His taking any relaxation or amusement. The nearest thing to anything of this kind in all the Gospel narrative that I can call to mind is where He invites His disciples to take some rest, in the words, "Go ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." This is the only place that I can remember in which the Saviour recognises anything like relaxation even. And why? Because He knew all things. Because Heaven and Hell were open before Him, and no one, as He, was able to realise what was involved in accepting or rejecting salvation.

And so the thought was ever present to Him: "I must work the work of Him that sent me while it is yet day." That work presented itself to Him in all its magnitude. The weight of a world's souls pressed upon Him, and so there is a tone of calm and yet inexpressibly awful solemnity in His every word.

And His work as a healer of the body pre-

sented itself under the same aspect of exceeding seriousness. Where others saw disease only, His eye penetrated into the deep and hidden fountain of the evil, the birth sin of the race. A poor creature whom He healed had been eighteen years paralytic; He speaks of her as having been eighteen years "bound by Satan;" not that Satan had been permitted to touch her as he touched Job, but her disease, in common with the diseases of all those whom He pitied and healed, would not have existed if man had not fallen, and so become enthralled to Satan.

So that none was serious as Christ was. And yet with all this there was nothing of melancholy, of pensiveness, much less of despondency; not a trace of these things in the life of Jesus. So far from it, there was in all He said the most abounding confidence in God and in Himself. If the thought was ever present with Him that He was for the "fall," it was equally present with Him that He was for the "rising again," of many in Israel. He was ever conscious that His work was God's work, His honour God's honour, His purpose God's purpose. And so His deep seriousness could only be paralleled by His amazing confidence. Think of the self-confidence contained in such words as, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." "Upon this rock I will

build My church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." "I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father appointed unto Me." "Whose soever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them." It is manifest that all this, and much more like it, was said in the fullest assurance that He, Man of sorrows though He was, would shortly be at the head of all things, with all creation under His feet.

And now we must leave the words of the Master and see as to the view which His greatest servant took of the things about us: His greatest servant undoubtedly in this sense, that the Lord committed to him by far the largest share in the building up of His Church. What is St. Paul's view of the Creation, that is, of the whole animate creation, man and beast, of the world of living creatures, as distinguished from that world of human thought and purpose which he elsewhere calls "this evil world," and which is essentially at enmity with God? What is his view of all this? It is a very serious view. A view which, if a man take it, it will go far, very far, to hinder him from living as if all things were made for his enjoyment, and he has nothing to do but to enjoy as much as he can. It must solemnise all his thoughts of the course of things

around him, make him earnest, sober-minded, subdued, in a word, serious. We have St. Paul's view of the state of things in which we live in the Epistle for this day. "We know," he writes, "that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies."

Observe these words. Nothing can exceed the gravity, the solemnity, the earnest sorrow with which he looks upon the ravages of sin on all around him, and yet even here there is nothing of despondency. On the contrary, he has before him a most glorious issue, an issue that will far more than make up for the grief and distress that have to be gone through before it is reached; but then it is an issue, an end, and an end which may be afar off, and so is not yet. The glory that shall be revealed, the deliverance from the bondage of corruption, is in the future. At present there was sounding in his ears the groaning of the creation. But are not such words too strong? Do they not sound exaggerated when the grief around us is mixed with so much enjoyment? No; these words are no more than the expression of what is, at times at least, in the heart of every one whose eyes are opened to see God, and the things of

God. What is there in them more than there is in the words we sing so often :

“ Swift to its close ebbs out life’s little day ;
Earth’s joys grow dim, its glories pass away.
Change and decay in all around I see.
O Thou who changest not, abide with me ” ?

There is nothing in St. Paul’s words more than in these, only we sing Keble’s hymn as if it was but the words of a pleasant song, gaily and thoughtlessly ; and St. Paul’s words are the overflowings of a heart overcharged with “ great heaviness and continual sorrow,” because of the bondage of corruption which seemed to him to weigh all things down.

Well, then, are we to suppose that the Apostle had no eye for the beautiful scenes of earth and sea in which his life was cast ? Could he not sing with all his soul that beautiful Psalm of creation, “ Praise the Lord, O my soul. O Lord, my God, Thou art exceeding glorious : Thou art clothed with majesty and honour. Thou deckest Thyself with light as with a garment, and spreadest out the heavens like a curtain ? ” If he were among us, would he not join with us in our Benedicite ? Would he not with heart and soul

“ The strain upraise of joy and praise ” ?

Yes, assuredly. But with all this he would say, “ The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain,” because he, of all men, would feel the

contrast between what creation in all its aspects actually is, and what it will be at the time of the redemption of the body. He would sorrow, and yet he would alway rejoice; for as he looked round upon his brethren he would realise that in each one there actually was or might be the seed of a spiritual body, to be on a day known to God raised up in the likeness of Christ's glorious body, with unknown capabilities for happiness and power; and when he looked round on God's lower unreasoning creation, he would remember that there was a day too for its deliverance, when "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid, and they shall not hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain."

But all this was in the future, and before it came there must be a long and terrible conflict, in which souls would be lost as well as won. And so this time of our probation was no time for trifling, for the work of rescuing souls from destruction was a serious work. A life such as this is cannot be enjoyed by one whose eyes have been once opened to the truths of sin and salvation. There are too many trails of the serpent about us. We are in the thick of a conflict too deadly that we, whose eyes are opened to it all, should live fearlessly, thoughtlessly, gaily, not to say impenitently, sinfully.

Such, then, is the Christian temper which the reading of all God's Word cannot fail to impress

upon us,—seriousness. It is not melancholy, much less despondency; on the contrary, it is joyful hope—the earnest expectation of a redeemed creation, waiting for the manifestation. But at times, nay, often, it will be grief and sorrow, misgivings for ourselves and for our fellow Christians, lest God withdraw His grace and leave us to ourselves. Such, at least, seem to have been the mingled sorrows and consolations of the Apostle: “We are troubled,” he says, “on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed.”

But there can be no settled melancholy, no despondency, unless, of course, there be want of faith; unless there be no firm hold on such truths as those of the Godhead, Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus.

If these things be true, then God's purposes will be all fulfilled, and the question for each one of us is, “Am I fulfilling His purpose in myself, and falling into His mind.” Oh, my friends (and these are the words, not of a bishop or priest, whose business it is to bring before men the vanity of earthly things, but of a courtier, living in the very thick of the world, and its pomps and vanities), “Oh, my friends, while we laugh, all things are serious around us. God is serious, Who exerciseth patience towards us; Christ is serious, Who shed His Blood for us; the Holy Ghost is serious, Who

striveth against the obstinacy of our hearts. The Holy Scriptures bring to our minds the most serious things in the world. The whole creation is serious in serving God and us. All that are in Heaven and Hell are serious. How then, can we be all our lives thoughtless, gay, light-hearted?" No; such cannot be if we have any faith: for faith is the evidence of things not seen, and the things unseen are eternal, and so of infinite concern to us, and our business here is "so to pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal."

VII.

GOD'S PROPERTY IN MAN; OR, GOD'S
OWNERSHIP OF MAN.

EZEKIEL xviii. 4.

"All souls are Mine."

THIS is one of those short, pithy, proverbial sayings of God's Holy Word which contain in themselves a very world of thought and truth.

It takes its place amongst such sayings as "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness," "God is a Spirit," "God is love," "I am the First and the Last," and multitudes of others, which have become the household words of our religion, which we have no trouble in remembering, and which help us ever to bear about in our minds, almost unconsciously, some right and just views of the deep things of God.

"All souls are mine." Do not then our "bodies" belong to God? St. Paul seems to think so when he says, "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body." Again, in Scripture the soul and the spirit are often distinguished. "I pray God," says the Apostle, "that your whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved

blameless." The "soul" often means the mere animal life, which is extinguished, as we suppose, at death, and the spirit means that highest principle within us which can apprehend and realise God. Does the life, then, that is, the soul, belong to God, and not the spirit, so that there should be in a man something which need own no allegiance, which the man can truly and legitimately call his own?

Now it is to be remarked that the word here translated "soul" in the original sometimes means the creature; indeed, any creature that has life, such as one of the brutes that perish.

Again, it sometimes, perhaps most frequently, means the life; the animal life which man has in common with the brutes.

And it sometimes means the thinking, reasoning faculty, the faculty within us which is guided by conscience, and which can exercise faith; in fact, the spirit. It bears the first of these meanings, the meaning of "creature," in a very early part of the Bible, the second chapter of Genesis, in the place where it is said, "And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called any living creature (or soul) that was the name thereof." The word answering

to "creature" here, as applied to irrational animals, is the same as the word "soul" used in the text "all *souls* are mine."

Again, in a vast number of places it simply means "life;" thus, to "seek the life" of any one is, in the Hebrew, to seek his soul.

But when it is said that "God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul," which is not said respecting any other creature which God made, we can hardly doubt but that God here describes the creation of that which distinguishes man from all other creatures, namely, His spirit—that which constitutes his especial likeness to Him Who is the Father of spirits.

Now in every sense in which it is possible to understand this word, whether we take it to mean the whole creature "man," and so understand it as meaning "all men are mine;" or whether we narrow it to the meaning of "life:" "All lives are so in My hand that I order absolutely at what moment life is to begin and at what moment life is to end;" or whether we take it as meaning *that* in us in which man resembles God, and which can know and worship God, so that it is as if God says, "the undying eternal principle in each man owes allegiance to Me, and I have a right to all its energies and aspirations,"—in each and all of these senses the saying holds good, "All souls are mine." Let us take each of these various

meanings of the word "soul" and see how true this saying is; and let us begin with supposing that it signifies, all "men," all "persons," are mine.

Consider how very completely we belong to God because He made us. No proprietorship of man in anything which he has made can be put in comparison with the proprietorship of God in us. When a builder builds a house, or when a carpenter makes a table, or a shipwright a ship, they all make these things of materials made ready to their hands, or which have been prepared for their use by others. In hardly any case can a man make anything absolutely by himself. One man must furnish him with the tools, another must supply him with materials, another must furnish him with food whilst he is about his work. Then, in almost all cases, he must have some assistance whilst he is at work; and then the thing which he makes, whatever it be, is very rarely designed by the man himself, and so is not the product of his own mind. He has the model of it given to him, or, if he has not, it is simply because he has served a long apprenticeship to one who engaged to teach him. And very seldom is the man his own master; his work, when he has expended all his labour and skill upon it, belongs to another, to whom he has, for a longer or shorter period, sold his time and labour and skill.

Now consider that not one of these limitations, these drawbacks, in the very least degree attaches to God's proprietorship. In making man, the plan or design was altogether God's. We know this, for we have the very words of the consultation, as it were, of the Ever-blessed Trinity: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." And so God made man in His own image. The reflection of this image could only be in the breast of the Creator. No archangel could give God any counsel in this matter. Then, when God carried out His design of making man He made him out of materials which He Himself had made. He made him out of the dust of the ground, i.e., out of the common elements of the matter of which the world is made, of materials which God Himself had brought into existence.

And God had no assistance in all this. He had no graving tools, as it were, wherewith to fashion the admirable statue. He needed no mould in which to cast it, no apparatus in which to mix the ingredients for bone or sinew, or flesh or blood, which form in our bodies so astonishing a combination. God had none to help Him. Whether the work was done in solitude and silence, or whether other creatures, such as angels, stood by in adoring wonder, we know not. Only this we are well assured of: that however man came into existence; whether he was made at once, in a moment, as it were,

or whether his creation was a process occupying countless ages after the manner of what is called "natural selection," he was God's alone work. God had none to help him in such a process.*

* Put back as we will the first appearance of life in the material universe, we cannot express its "genesis" except in terms which imply that it came into the world from without, from a sphere above the material and sensible. An illustration of this appears in the Inaugural Address of the President of the British Association for this year (1870): "If it were given me," he says, "to look beyond the abyss of geologically recorded time to the still more remote period when the earth was passing through physical and chemical conditions which it can no more see again than a man can recall his infancy, I should expect to be a witness of the evolution of living protoplasm from not-living matter. I should expect to see it appear under forms of great simplicity, endowed, like existing fungi, with the power of determining the formation of new protoplasm from such matters as ammonium, carbonates, oxalates, and tartrates, alkaline and earthy phosphates and water, without the aid of light." The Professor would expect to see the first germ of living substance "*endowed*." But who was to endow it?—endow it with the astonishing power of unconsciously, and without any will of its own, converting dead carbonates and tartrates into living tissue?

Similarly, in the very interesting book of Mr. Wallace, the co-discoverer with Mr. Darwin of the doctrine of natural selection, we read such passages as the following:—

P. 15. "This new group, being subject to these altered conditions, has modifications of structure and organisation *given* to it, and becomes," &c. Who gave these modifications?

Again, p. 27. "The difficulty is overcome by assuming that such varieties have strict limits, and can never again vary further from the original type." Who assigned such limits?

P. 49. "Now it is remarkable in how many cases nature

But when the human being is made he has to be sustained. Man's frame is so made that it wastes and perishes unless it is continually replenished from without ; unless, that is, it has sustenance. And God created man in a world filled with everything adapted to sustain his life ; but all the absolute gift of God : " Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat unto you ; even as the green herb have I *given* you all things." The vegetables on whose tissues and the animals on whose flesh or milk man feeds, being, equally with man himself, designed and made and sustained by God.

Now think of all this. If we, after we have made something by expending time and skill and strength upon it, call it our own, and claim

gives this boon to the animal, by colouring it with such tints as may best serve to escape from its enemies or entrap its prey." Again, we ask, what does "nature" stand for here ?

Again, p. 126. " Even flowers themselves present us with none of those wonderful designs, those complicated arrangements of stripes and dots and patches of colour, that harmonious blending of hues in lines and bands and shaded spots, which are so general a feature in insects." Who designed these designs, and arranged these arrangements ?

Again, p. 127. " It is the opinion of Mr. Darwin that we owe much of the beauty of flowers to the necessity of attracting insects to aid in their fertilisation." Who discovered this necessity and provided for it, or rather who ordained the necessity ?

The above are from ' Contributions to the Theory of Natural Selection,' by A. R. Wallace.

it, and are angry if any one attempts to take it from us, how must we ourselves belong to God Who created us! And has not God a right to assert His claim, and to be justly displeased if we ourselves deprive Him of His property in us?

And now let us leave this broader and more general meaning of the word "soul," and come to the second, by which "All souls are mine" means that "Every man's life is at My disposal. He came into the world at a time appointed by Me, and at a time fixed by Me he must leave it."

God has not decreed any certain period for the life of man, so that he should be able to count upon living such and such a length of time. There are certain things to which God has appointed definite periods, such as, for instance, the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, and the things in this world which depend upon them, such as the length of the seasons, and of day and night, and the ebbing and flowing of the tides; but the life of man is reserved by God absolutely to His own disposal.

One man is cut off in his youthful sins, and another man is allowed to sin out his threescore years and ten. One is cut off before he can be useful, and another in his usefulness, and another survives his usefulness. God gives no explanation whatsoever of the laws, moral or

material, by which He regulates the term of human life. Only we know that in this, as in all else, He will act with perfect justice to that creature into whose breast He has put a reverence for what is just and a contempt for what is unjust. The day will come when in this matter of the prolonging or shortening of human life God will justify Himself, and each soul will confess that He has dealt justly with her, and, in spite of herself, mercifully also.

So that we are not only in the condition of being the absolute property of God because He made us out of nothing, and has maintained us hitherto; but our life, the term of our service here on earth, the period of our probation, is at His disposal.

If we owe it to Him that we should love and serve Him because He has made us, and that we should acknowledge His bounty, because He has sustained us hitherto, we also owe it to ourselves that we should at least fear Him,—fear One Who can at any moment summon us before Him; and fear One, too, Who is thus summoning first one and then another amongst us—summoning the young with life before them, and the middle-aged in the midst of activity; summoning those whom we can ill spare, as well as those whose protracted sufferings make us thank God for their deliverance from the miseries of this sinful world.

And think not that fear dishonours God. Slavish fear may, because God has made us His sons, and has sent, or is willing to send, the Spirit of adoption into our hearts ; but still this Holy Spirit said by the mouth of David, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them his covenant." And a greater than David commends the fear of God, not to His enemies, but to His friends. Yes, brethren, let us ever remember that there were certain twelve men whom the Lord attached to Himself as His friends ; and not to His enemies, not to His crucifiers, not to the wicked, but to these, His own, He commends the fear of His Father in the awful words, "I say unto you, my *friends*, be not afraid of them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do ; but I will forewarn you Whom ye shall fear. Fear Him Who, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell, yea, I say unto you, fear Him."

Let us now take the highest meaning which can be given to the word "soul," as meaning the better, the immortal part of man, *that* in him which can take in the ideas of God and eternity, and probation, and the unseen world and its realities. What can we say of the soul in this sense of "spirit," of its creation, its materials ? Combine together dead matter as you will, not even a lunatic would suppose that any arrangement of its component parts can possibly make

it think and reason and remember and love, above all, know God and pray to Him. Of what then can the soul or spirit be made? How came it into existence? God, its Maker, only knows, nay, only can conceive. But it is clear that our bodies were designed for our souls or spirits, to be their clothing, their instruments; and by consequence the soul is as much greater and more wonderful than the body as the man himself is greater than the clothes he wears or the tools he uses.

Now God can especially say of the soul, taken as meaning the spirit, "All souls are Mine."

If God's having given to a man a body fearfully and wonderfully made, and having sustained that body hitherto, entitles Him to man's love and service; if God's holding at His absolute disposal the life of man should make a man habitually fear and obey Him; still more does the fact that God has given to man a spirit capable of knowing God, and designed to share the joy of God for ever—still more, I say, does this give God such a claim upon the love and service of such a being that God can indeed say, "All souls are Mine."

If a man has a right to the heart of his wife because of the marriage bond; if a father or mother has a right to the heart of their son and daughter because of the filial bond; surely God has a right to all in man that we call his

“spirit,” as meaning his understanding, judgment, will, heart, faith, hope, devotion. Whether His right be recognised or not, He has a right to say “All souls are Mine.”

Now here comes in that greatest of all considerations to us sinners: the right of redemption. In order to enforce this right upon us God uses extraordinary figures. God speaks, not once or twice, but continually, as if one of His attributes were divided from Himself; as if His justice or His law were on one side and He on another. He speaks as if His justice, because we had sold ourselves to sin and Satan, had a right to us, so as to punish us by eternally separating us from all that is good; and in order to rescue us from such misery He pays down a price to His justice or to His violated law on our account, so that He may rescue us out of the power of His justice, and be able to deal with us in mercy.*

* This language may be to a certain extent figurative, and the figures have been no doubt unduly strained; but we must remember that when God condescends to teach us by figurative language the figures which He uses are the most suitable mode of commending to us certain realities—realities, no doubt, inconceivable by us, but still, we may be quite sure, far beyond the signification of the figures. The following direct assertions of Holy Writ upon this all-important matter are based, more or less, upon the figurative language alluded to. “The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many:” Matt. xx. 28. “This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins:” Matt. xxvi. 28. “Who

Now this buying us again, as it were, is Redemption, and the price is the Blood of the Son of God. God, by His very nature, is infinitely above the suffering of death, and the only-begotten Son of God, to Whom the Father has given to have "life in Himself," is infinitely above and out of the reach of the suffering of death; and yet this Eternal Son took upon Him and assumed into the unity of His person a nature which could die, and in that nature, in some inscrutable way, paid down His life a ransom for us; so that those words of the great Apostle are true: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His Blood . . . that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

All this gives to God, over again as it were, the most absolute right in us. "Ye are not your

gave Himself a ransom for all:" 1 Tim. ii. 6. "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity:" Tit. ii. 14.

The reality of these figures of ransom through Christ's Life and Blood must be "as if,"—must be far more than "as if" we had been taken captive by an earthly enemy, and had been redeemed out of his power at a very costly price. It is a deliverance in the spiritual and eternal world answering to the deliverance of a captive taken in temporal warfare; only the reality is as much greater as the spiritual and eternal conflict between good and evil exceeds in its importance any temporal earthly warfare whatsoever.

own," the Apostle says, "for ye are bought with a price," and this price the most costly one that even God could give. The Scriptures, in speaking of the preciousness of the Blood of Christ, speak of the most incorruptible of earthly things, silver and gold, as corruptible compared with it.

God then represents Himself as having paid down the most precious of all ransoms for all of us, for you and me, in order that He might be able to have mercy upon us, and not only to have mercy upon us, but to do to us through eternity according to His exuberant loving-kindness; so that all men are His, in order that being His they may be eternally rescued from all evil, and be good, holy, and happy.

It remains for us to consider whether we are acknowledging the property of God in us. We cannot help God's having this property in us, for we have been born in His universe, and in a part of it which He has redeemed. It is so. But though we cannot hinder God's having this right in us, we can deprive ourselves of all the blessings of having such a God as our Owner and Proprietor, by persisting in withholding ourselves, our hearts, our service, our fear from God.

God's we are, and God's we must ever be. Only it depends upon ourselves whether we are God's as His prisoners or God's as His friends; so that as a man treasures up his most precious

things, so God should treasure us up, not as the lifeless jewels of an earthly diadem, but as the wondrous words of the Book of Wisdom hath it: "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of the Lord, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction. But they are in peace. For though they be punished in the sight of men yet is their hope full of immortality. And having been a little chastised they shall be greatly rewarded: for God proved them and found them worthy for Himself. As gold in the furnace hath He tried them, and received them as a burnt offering. And in the time of their visitation they shall shine, and run to and fro like sparks among the stubble. They shall judge the nations and have dominion over the people, and their Lord shall reign for ever. They that put their trust in Him shall understand the truth, and such as be faithful in love shall abide with Him: for grace and mercy is to His saints, and He hath care for His elect."

VIII.

THE TRIAL OF FAITH.

DANIEL iii. 16—18.

“O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

THE circumstances which led the three Holy Children to return this noble answer to the King of Babylon are so familiar to us all that I need not now recount them. The practical question for us to-day is, What enabled these three saints of God to return such an answer, and to stand to it, so that they willingly submitted to be bound, and to be cast into the fire without recanting? They saw the rage and fury of the monarch, who had but a little before exalted them to the chief places in his kingdom. They heard his commandment to heat the furnace seven times hotter than it was wont to be heated; they witnessed the preparations made for casting themselves alive into it. One single word doubtless would have delivered them. The engagement to make one short act of obeisance or adoration, which would not have

taken a moment, would have purchased their lives. And what lives? The lives of the three friends of the greatest minister of the greatest monarch in the world. No lives so influential for good, so precious to the Church and the people of God. Daniel had requested the king for his three friends, and in answer he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. See, then, what valuable lives the lives of these three men were: worshippers of the one true God, having all or almost all power in the great heathen empire; professors of the only true religion, with the eyes of the people of the greatest heathen empire in the world upon them; above all, members of the true Church, having all authority to order and control the affairs of the kingdom, so that, even if the time of the captivity of the Jews might not be shortened, its rigours might still be alleviated.

Such were the lives of these three young men; humanly speaking, of priceless value to the world, to the Church, to the cause of God. And for one single prostration before an image—an image which they knew to be nothing, and to represent a being who had no existence,—they might have saved their lives from a cruel death. But it could not be. They were called by God, not only to govern on the behalf of their oppressed brethren, but to witness for Him before the eyes of a great idolatrous

empire. Their high place and station were given to them so that all men should see their testimony to the existence of one living and true God, to whom alone Divine honour was due; and they hesitated not for a moment to face a cruel death, when their duty to God in the way of bearing testimony to His alone Godhead demanded it. They did not hesitate, I said: "We are not careful, O Nebuchadnezzar," they rejoined, "to answer thee in this matter. Other matters concerning which thou inquirest of us, the ordering of thy kingdom, or the interpretation of thy dreams and visions, require, it may be, anxious thought and prayer for illumination and guidance; but this is a matter about which any anxious thought, betraying any secret doubt as to our duty, would be treason to our God." Such, of course, is the true reading of their rejoinder. What enabled them to answer so promptly and so boldly? You will say, "Their faith;" and indeed their faith, and the miraculous issue which it brought about, are specially mentioned by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews along with other instances of faith displayed by the greatest worthies of their Church and nation. "What shall I say more?" the apostolic writer asks; "for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and Sampson, and Barak, and Jephtha, of David also, and the prophets; who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness,

stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire."

This instance of faith "quenching the violence of fire" can of course only refer to that of the three Holy Children, whose faith made them resolve to glorify God in the fire, and as a reward of whose faith God in their case actually quenched the violence of the fire; for He was Himself, not potentially, but personally, by their side, when the King looked into the furnace, and saw a fourth there, and His form was that of the Son of God.

And now, my friends, it may be profitable to look a little to the faith of these three saints. Their faith was not the faith of hermits, who fled from the world into the desert; neither was it the faith of poor, unlearned, ignorant men, who, because of their narrow sphere of observation and contracted views, have, as is assumed, little difficulty about believing in God and in the powers of the unseen world. So far from this, the faith of these three holy men was the faith of those who knew the world. They were in the very thick of it. Its grandeur and pomp and power and prizes were not things that they could moralise about the vanity of from a safe distance. They themselves were surrounded by its pomp and glory; they themselves wielded its power, and had won, so to speak, its highest prizes. They had been set over the affairs of the chief province of its greatest

empire. In all probability the wealth and splendour with which they were environed was far greater than that of any servant or minister of the Queen of England, perhaps much greater than that of the Queen herself; for the province of Babylon alone was a vast plain, far larger than all England, of unexampled fertility, and if well watered, as it then was, by a vast network of canals, yielded to the labours of the sower many hundredfold. Great Babel itself, the mighty capital of this garden kingdom, was on the great highway by which the wealth of the East flowed into Europe and the West. Taking the lowest estimate of the extent of the circuit of its walls, we shall have for the space within its ramparts an area of above 100 square miles; nearly, that is, five times the size of London. A writer in a publication which professes to give the latest results at which modern discovery has arrived on the history and antiquities of the lands mentioned in Scripture, thus speaks of the buildings of Babylon: "We must give the Babylonians credit for a genius and a grandeur of conception rarely surpassed, which led them to employ the labour whereof they had the command in works of so imposing a character. With only brick for stone, and at first only slime for mortar, they constructed edifices of so vast a size that they still remain at the present day among the most enormous

ruins in the world, impressing the beholder at once with awe and admiration." *

I believe that none of us can now realise the pomp and splendour with which the world of that time would display itself before the gaze of these three holy youths. And remember that in all probability, nay, rather in all certainty, all that we now call "civilisation" was associated with the great heathen capital, and that Jerusalem was to a Babylonian courtier the insignificant capital of a semi-barbarous province.

But this even is not half that we must take into account if we would estimate the stand made by these servants of God. For this gorgeous, flaunting, Babylonian world had conquered the Church—conquered it with a completeness of which we, with our views of the spirituality and universality of the Church, can form no estimate; for the Church of God was then far more under the dominion of the things of time and sense than it has been since the day of Pentecost; and the King of Babylon, by the burning of its temple, and the captivity of its priesthood, and the removal of its sacred vessels, had, at one stroke, deprived it of all by which man could discern its very existence. For its peculiar worship was, by the ordination of God Himself, only lawful in one spot, and that was the temple of Jerusalem. Think what a trial it must have been to a Jew to see the

* Article 'Babel' in Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible.'

worship of God abolished in the one spot where alone it was lawful. It would be to him as if the very gates of hell had prevailed against the Church of God.

Such was the world then ; and to the representative of this world, to the man who wielded all its power, and around whom was circled all its pomp and pageantry, to this man the Holy Children answered : " We care not to answer you, O King. Our God Whom we serve is able to deliver us. For though the Church of the living God be in captivity, His Temple burned with fire, and His worship suspended, yet you, though perchance you know it not, rule by His power. You rule not by the power of Bel, or of Nebo, but by His power Whose altar you have overthrown. He can restrain your fury and save the confessors of the true faith, when you think you can destroy them utterly. In Him you live and move. For a time, for a brief and appointed time, He has given you power over His people. But you are only His tool, and when He has done with you He can cast you aside. You are the rod in His hand to chastise us, and when He has accomplished His work of judgment against us for our sins He will cast you away unless you repent."

Such is the interpretation of the answer of these Holy Children. But you see they go much further than this. They say to the King : " But if not"—if it is not in the purpose of

God to deliver us from the burning flame, it makes no difference in the matter of our duty. We will not serve your gods. It is not right or reasonable that we, to whom the true God has revealed His name and power and goodness, should serve gods of gold and silver. It infinitely dishonours the Maker of all things to worship Him under any figure or form. To what can you liken Him Who fills all things with His presence and orders all things by His power? How can you honour the Being Whose eyes are in every place, and Whose hands made the heavens and the earth—how can you honour such a Being by worshipping Him under a figure with the hands, eyes, or presence of a man? It is not right, then, so to worship Him, and we will do what is right in His sight; feeling assured that if not now, yet hereafter, we shall receive from Him what is right. For our God inhabits eternity. He is the God of our fathers. Though their bodies have been resting in their graves for a thousand years and more, yet are their souls in His safe keeping. He has said, ‘Them that honour me, I will honour.’ He has said that He is ‘a righteous Judge, strong and patient.’ He has taught us to call Him merciful, for He will ‘reward every one according to his works.’ We are safe then in His hands. Though you burn us to ashes, and scatter those ashes to the four winds, we shall still live in His sight.”

Such was the faith which inspired the noble answer of these Jewish youths. It was faith in the God of their fathers as the One Living and True God.

And now we have to ask, How was it that these three Holy Men had faith to give this courageous answer—to endure the wrath of the temporal king because they so vividly realised the presence and power of the Eternal King? I mean, was this faith a mere impulse, or an abiding principle? Was it breathed into them as it were, just at the moment? Or was it a state of mind in which they had long been dwelling, which had long before been called into exercise, and had long before borne good fruit?

This their faith was no new, no untried thing. The first chapter of this book brings them before us as exercising devout and self-denying obedience to the most burdensome and minute regulations of the law of Moses. For God, apparently for the one purpose of keeping His people separate from the heathen amongst whom they dwelt, had forbidden them the use of many creatures as food which we, who live after this His law has been repealed, eat with perfect allowance, and therefore without sin. But it was not so with them of old. Not only was the Jew restricted from eating the flesh of many creatures which, like the green herbs, seem to have been given to all the

children of the patriarch Noah as food, but his meat must be killed in a particular way; so that he would be ceremonially defiled if he eat even of the King's meat or at his table. Now, these three Holy Children, remembering the strictness of the law of Moses respecting the eating of things strangled and the unlawfulness of particular meats, determined to refuse even the food sent them from the King's table. They did this at the peril of their retaining the King's favour—very probably, if we take into account the frantic passions of Nebuchadnezzar, at the risk of their lives.

Now see what specious arguments might have been addressed to them by their worldly-wise friends. "Meat from the King's table," they might have said, "cannot possibly harm you. Meat," they might have said (and if they had so said they would have anticipated the words of the greatest of merely human teachers) "Meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse." Or they might, if they had known the future, have fallen back on the authority of Infinite Wisdom itself, and said that that which entereth into the mouth defileth not the man—defileth not the responsible, rational, spiritual part of man. "Why, then," they might ask, "be so strict?" Why go counter to the King's wish, and run the risk of incurring his displeasure? Why make your-

selves singular? Why adhere to the letter of these obsolete statutes under such different circumstances? It is the providence of God which has carried you captive to Babylon. Do not you gather from such a leading that you are not to live and act as if you were at liberty in Jerusalem? Besides all this, you assume too much. It savours of presumption in those who are so young to set themselves up as examples of strictness."

Such would not be unnatural, or even improbable arguments. But to all this specious reasoning, this fair show of religious colouring to disguise worldly conformity, there was one answer: "The law of God respecting meats is not yet repealed. God may, in His own good time, remove this yoke from off our necks, but as yet it is binding upon all God's people, no matter where they are, or what master they serve. We must obey God rather than men, if we believe Him to be the Omnipresent Ruler and the Future Judge."

Now in all this obedience in these apparently trifling matters of "meats and drinks" these three Holy Men showed their faith, their abiding faith in a God Who had ordained all the precepts of His law, great and small, in the most far-seeing wisdom. He foresaw that it was needful that His people during their state of pupilage under the law, should be separate; and He ordained precepts respecting meats and

such things to this very end, that, obeying them strictly, they should not be able even to eat with those of other nations. In no other way could the integrity of their faith and the purity of their worship be preserved.

So you see how in this little thing—this matter of meats and drinks—this “beggarly element,” which in our new state of things under the Gospel it would be sin in us to be even troubled about—in this, I say, by the deliberate and determined stand which they made, they both shewed and exercised their faith in the Unseen; and so, when the great crisis came, and they had to witness in the face of the King and the whole heathen empire, they were ready. Their faith had been exercised and strengthened by self-denial. They had rejected the dainties of the royal table and lived on pulse and water, because they realised the omnipresence of God and the eternal sanctions of His law; and now they were able to show to the heathen what faith is and how it is upheld and conquers.

But more, far more than this. The record of their steadfastness has been enshrined in the Scriptures, and has taught the lesson of faith to the very mystical Body of Christ.

We know not, and shall not know till the great day, how many martyrs and confessors, whose courage in times of persecution has preserved to us the very faith itself, and whose blood has been the seed of the Church, have

been upheld by the example of these three Holy Youths. One thing is certain: that no instance of faith is more frequently alluded to in the old Fathers, and the Church has from the beginning embodied their song which we have sung this morning in her offices of devotion.

Such was their faith. What is ours? And yet theirs was the faith of Jews, ours the faith of Christians. They never stood up in their most sacred worship and said, "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from Heaven and was made man." It is true that there were faint streaks of the light of the Sun of Righteousness even then shooting up from under the horizon; but after all, it was but the grey twilight of the early morn, whilst we are in the clear bright sunshine of noon. They had no Gospels containing the holy self-denying life of Jesus to meditate upon and pray over. It is true they had the books of Moses and Samuel and the Prophets; but what are these when set side by side with the life of God manifest in the flesh? Neither had they the sacramental means whereby we are made partakers of the holy life-giving humanity of the Second Adam. They had circumcision; but we read of no promise of grace annexed to it. There was assuredly no promise of a new nature before the Fountain of that new nature

was opened in the Incarnation of the Son of God. Above all, it was not given to them to eat the flesh of the Son of Man and to drink His blood. Respecting no bread that the ordinances of their worship had to do with was it ever said, "This is my body which is given for you." Respecting no cup that they had tasted was it ever said by God, "This is my blood which is shed for you." What, then, is our faith? We who make confession of the faith once delivered to the saints; we who possess the sacraments of the One Mystical Body; we who have in our hands the Gospels of Jesus; we who have the letters of the Apostles and the records of the struggles and sufferings of the early Church,—what is our faith? Would it resist unto blood striving against sin? We cannot tell. The final perseverance of any soul is known only to God. But this assuredly we can tell: whether it entails upon us any daily self-denial and any conflict with the world.

"May God give us grace to receive these thoughts into our hearts, and to display the fruit of them in our conduct! What are we but simple dust and ashes, grovellers who are creeping on to Heaven, not with any noble sacrifice, but without pain, without trouble, in the midst of worldly blessings? Well, but He can save, in the humblest path of life and in the most tranquil times." Yes, the form of the

Son of God can be seen with the Christian in the quiet path of life as well as in the midst of the furnace; and His presence is in very deed as much needed in the one as in the other, if our walk as well as our conflict is to be as it becometh the Gospel. Let us pray, then, for His presence, that He may be with us as He has been with our brethren who have borne the burden and heat of the day.

IX.

THE UNSEEN WORLD.

GENESIS xxxii. 1, 2.

“And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s host : and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.”

IF we accept the Word of God as designed to teach us the truth of God, we must believe that there are two worlds, the seen and the unseen, the natural and the spiritual. The natural world is that which presents itself to our senses, our sight, our hearing, our touch. The earth we tread upon, the flowers and trees which adorn it, the mountains, the seas, the rivers and streams, and the various forms of life with which all these are peopled ; and then, too, the unnumbered worlds which exist in the heavens, some of them at immense distances from us ; the sun, the moon and stars—all these, together with the world we live in, form the visible universe, the natural world.

The unseen spiritual world is a world which does not force the tokens of its presence and existence on our senses, as the natural world does ; but, if we have any faith in God and in a future state, we must believe that it exists as

really and as substantially as the worlds which we see.

The spiritual world is, first of all, God; and then between God and ourselves a countless multitude of spirits; not of one kind only, or of one fashion or mould, but of all kinds and of all ranks and degrees; for the Scripture speaks of "thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers," in this spiritual or unseen world.

Moreover, there is the same difference of moral character between some of these spirits and others as there is between some men and others; some are good and holy, and are employed by God in executing His purposes in countless varieties of ways; and some of these spirits are evil, having fallen in the hour of their trial, and are now engaged in the desperate work of thwarting the designs of God, so far as He gives them liberty to oppose Him.

But, besides all this, there is a department of the unseen or spiritual world with which we, as human beings, are, from our natural feelings, beyond measure interested; for there is a place where the spirits of the just are collected together till the day of the coming of Jesus Christ, in earnest longing for His appearance; for not till the manifestation of the Lord of both worlds, the seen and the unseen, will their bliss be perfected. In this region of departed spirits are those whom we have known once and know no longer. They have gone; i. e.,

their spirits have fled somewhere, and have left behind them only the remains of that mortal frame of finely-fashioned clay which, though it was the means by which we knew them and they knew us, was not *themselves*.

They have gone—they have disappeared utterly: all that of them which met the eye; but that in them which really loved and cared, and taught, and learnt, cannot have perished with its mere case, its clothing, its visible frame. They themselves have gone, and God alone knows where, only we know that if they have departed, fearing Him, and believing in His Son, they are in His safe keeping somewhere in the unseen world.

Now all men who have any pretensions whatsoever to be Christians, even in name, believe this—believe, that is, in the immortality of the soul; believe that when the soul is separated from the body it still lives somewhere, and thinks, and hopes, and waits, and, after its manner, speaks and acts, though that manner may be unknown to us. Men would be little short of atheists if they did not believe this.

And yet a great many men, who would be very angry if they were accused of not believing in the immortality of the soul, are affecting to doubt whether there are angels or devils.

Now this appears to me not only very unbelieving, and very presumptuous and irreverent, but also very senseless and ridiculous.

For if the spirit of man can exist out of a body, after living in a body, why cannot God make spirits whose nature it is to live, and think, and speak, and act independently of any gross bodies, or at least with more etherial frames, answering to their higher place in His creation?

If I, when I die, must go somewhere, and live somewhere in the unseen world, why cannot there be in that world already spirits like to what I shall then be, who have been there from the time of their creation?

But again, the man who believes not in the existence of this angelic world is guilty of the amazing presumption of undertaking to say that there are no living beings, or orders of beings, between the race of men and the God Who made all things.

Consider how great the God is in Whom we believe.

We believe that He made the worlds. Consider what perhaps is the lowest of the wonders pertaining to the worlds—and that is their enormous size. The earth on which we live is comparatively a small one, and yet it is about twenty-four thousand miles round. And not only did God make it, but He must some time or other have given to it an impulse which sends this vast ball of heavy matter careering through space at the rate of about eighteen miles every moment. One who as a successful mathematician had been all his life calculating

forces told me that he, though he had been thinking of these things for years, seemed to himself to have no faculties to apprehend or imagine any force or power capable of this.

In addition to this, God has made a law for this and all other worlds, by which they keep their paths, or otherwise the creatures which inhabit them could not be preserved in life.

In addition to all this, the mind of God must have had before It all the countless living creatures with which the world is peopled; their habitations, their food, their clothing, their powers of sight and swiftness, for in ten thousand matters do all these require to be adapted to the element or to the climate in which they are to live.

Again, consider what must be the mind of that Being who can devise and bring into existence such a thing as the mind of man. Again, what must be the sense of beauty in that Being who can devise the forms and blend the colours of the flowers—those flowers respecting which the Maker of them said, that the greatest and most magnificent of earthly kings, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of them?

Again, and lastly, what must be the boundless faculties of that Being Who takes note of all the prayers, all the acts, all the words, nay, even all the thoughts, of all His rational creatures, and, because He is a just Judge, will,

some day or other, bring all into judgment; a Being Who has in His mind at once all events, Whom nothing escapes, nothing deceives, nothing wearies, nothing baffles.

Now surely there *may* be some creatures between this great God and us men. It seems reasonable. There is assuredly plenty of room, so to speak, for such a thing. All nations whatsoever, barbarous and civilized, have believed hitherto that there are. Nature herself seems to lead us to believe it, for there is a countless variety of creatures of all ranks between us and the lowest forms of life; why, then, should there not be cherubim and seraphim, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers betwixt us and the Infinite God?

Scripture comes in here to assist reason, and assures us that there are creatures betwixt us and God, and that these creatures are spiritual beings, and form the world of angels.

And now let me direct attention to one or two revelations of Holy Scripture respecting the unseen world of angels. God has hidden from us almost everything respecting the physical nature, so to speak, of the unseen world, as for instance, its locality, and the mode in which its inhabitants exist.

But there are two very awful facts respecting it, which we gather from almost every notice of it in Scripture.

The first of these is, that there is in it the

same antagonism between good and evil, sin and holiness, happiness and misery, as there is in this world. Just as men leave this world, some good and some evil, some penitent and others hardened, so they will find it to be in the world to which we are all tending. There they will find good spirits to welcome the just or the pardoned, and carry him to his place of blissful repose and expectation, and there will be evil spirits to exult over the souls who have thrown away their day of grace, and receive them into their own horrible confraternity.

And these good and evil spirits are opposed to one another. There can be no alliance in the unseen spiritual world, as there so often is in this world, betwixt good and bad men, to carry out common objects. Here, in this world, good and bad men often have to associate together. They are in partnership together in trade, or in alliance in political partisanship, or in national defence, or, owing to their thinking alike on certain points in dispute, they are in union and act in concert even in religion; but in the spiritual world this will not be.

Have you ever thought how awful, yet how very natural, is the declaration of Scripture at the beginning of that portion taken from the Book of Revelation read as the Epistle for St. Michael's Day. It begins with the words, "There was war in heaven." Think of this. War where God is! War in the abodes of rest

and peace! War in heaven! Why, is it not enough to have war on earth? Now, of course you are not to suppose that heaven in this place signifies only the state of final bliss and reward; but even supposing that it signifies, in the widest sense, the unseen spiritual world, how strange do the words sound. We associate wars and tumults and such things with this fallen imperfect world, and yet here is war in the unseen state.

And yet it is natural. We might almost say that it must be so, if in the world of spirits there are two characters, good and evil: good on the side of God, evil against God.

Oh, yes! if there be the two divisions of good and bad, and if God suffers them in any sense to come on common ground, we may very safely prophesy that there will be direct antagonism: opposition far more deadly, far more engrossing, far more all-embracing than any warfare in this world of which we can form a conception.

About the nature of this war, about its weapons and wounds, for instance, it is idle, rather it is childish, to speculate. The Scripture simply tells us that there was (perhaps there now is) war amongst spirits. This warfare will be, in its circumstances, in accordance with their nature, of which we know nothing; but the thing which is at the root of the deadly strife we know well. There is no room for

conjecture about *it*. It is their character as good or evil. And of one or other of the two we must partake, we even now partake. We are now in the sight of the Searcher of hearts, either of God or of the devil.

According to the teaching of the Apostle, he that doeth good, he that doth not commit sin, he that loveth, is on God's side, sees God, knows Him—is the child of God or born of God; he that committeth sin, and hateth his brother, and confesseth not that Jesus is the Son of God, is not of God—is of the devil, is in darkness, doth not see or know God.

So that when we go out of this world into the unseen, then, it may be (I do not say that it must be, for that is not a matter on which to dogmatise), it may be, I say, if there be then going on the deadly conflict mentioned in the Apocalypse, that we shall at once take our side; the righteous, the holy, the loving, rather perhaps, the penitents, the forgiven, on the side of the good angels; and the impenitent, the unbelieving, the ungodly, the selfish, the impure, on the side of the devils.

Another awful fact revealed to us in Scripture respecting the unseen world is, that it is eternal. The Apostle St. Paul asserts this in terms at once most general and most express: "The things seen," he says, "are temporal, but the things unseen are eternal."

There is life there, and it is eternal; and

there is death in the unseen world, and that death is eternal. The evil spirits, though they are not as yet, as we suppose, shut up in God's prison, are eternally dead. A creature which is all evil, is dead in the highest sense of the word death, for the highest life is union with God, and the most intense death is severance from God; if God, that is, be the Life.

I shall now, however, not consider this; but rather dwell upon some thoughts suggested to us by the immortal life of the elect angels. In the first lesson for the morning of St. Michael's Day, we read that as the patriarch Jacob went on his way, "the angels of God met him:" and the thing which apparently struck the patriarch most, was their exceedingly great number—they were like a vast army, or rather like a double army, and because of this he called the name of the place Mahanaim, that is, the two camps—the double host or army.

Now, every one of these ministering spirits which Jacob saw is yet in existence. They do not pass out of their world and become so that they are no more seen, as we pass out of this world, and are no more seen. Each one of this vast host is yet in his appointed place in the unseen world. Death cannot touch him. Old age or decay of faculties cannot affect him. For how many centuries he had been in being before he formed one of the angelic army which Jacob saw we know not. Only we know this,

that since then, wherever he has been, he has been unceasingly, and of set purpose, doing the will of God—doing the will of God, not as a machine might do it, not even as a man might do it, only dimly believing that he was working out some higher purpose ; but as a pure intellectual spirit, freely, consciously—in all probability watching intently the progress of the work assigned to him and to his fellows.

Here, then, are spirits, perhaps countless in number, whose memory alone reaches back 4000 years. Think what, in all probability, each one of these must have witnessed, I do not mean in heaven, but on earth. Any one of these might have seen the passage of the Red Sea, the giving of the Law, the wanderings in the wilderness, the passage through the Jordan. He might have watched the career of David, and the building of the Temple. He might have seen the fire descend on Elijah's sacrifice, and the destruction of Sennacherib's army.

Above all, such a one may have seen, ought we not to say, must have seen, the Divine form and lineaments of the Eternal Son of God—have seen Him, too, after having beheld and adored His pre-existent glory, before, for our sake, He laid it aside. He must, we should think, have formed one of that "multitude of the heavenly host" which appeared to the shepherds in the night of the Nativity. He may have been one of those who came and ministered to the Son

of Man in the wilderness after Satan had left Him. He must, we should say, have been one of that vast army, more than twelve legions, which, on the day of the crucifixion, were ready at one word from God, to make short work of such a world as that of the crucifiers of Christ. Doubtless he would have formed one of that vast host which witnessed and assisted at the triumph of Christ, when He took His seat at the Right Hand of God, "angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him."

This, one may say, is all fancy; but remember that all which we have been imagining merely assumes that these spirits are immortal, and that they take the deepest interest in the unfolding of God's dealings in the Redemption of man, and that a spirit who was privileged to be present at the first unfolding in patriarchal times, in the very land where it all took place, might, not unnaturally, be allowed to watch and take his part in the further developments of the great plan. We have also not imagined the case of one of the leaders of the heavenly host, but of one of those who, so to speak, compose its rank and file. The least and the lowest of them might be able to speak to us of all these things.

Or again, supposing that the station of one of these spirits had been far away from the scene of the great events of Redemption, that it had been his lot to watch and guard some

successive generations of the children of God in some remote corner of the world, yet think what it would be to know and converse with one who has been the direct agent of God in tending and guarding, perhaps, one hundred successive generations of God's people. What a vast store of providences would such a spirit be able to recount—providences which he himself had consciously assisted to bring about! How could he tell of prayers answered, of dangers averted, of meals supplied in the greatest straits, of tears dried, of warnings given, of the emissaries of the evil one kept at bay! All this may seem to some, perhaps, far beyond the experiences of any one of the heavenly host which Jacob saw; but in all probability it is very much, perhaps ridiculously, below the reality: for we have been supposing one who had to do only with earthly things, or things of which the scene was this world; whereas such a one might tell us, if we were able to hear his words, of the court of God Himself, of the secrets of Paradise, of creation, of the trial of the heavenly host, perhaps of his own trial ages before the fall of our first parents in the garden.

To this world of spirits we are hastening. How near it may be to us we know not. We may pass into it at death, or it may break upon us at the coming of Jesus Christ.

What interest have we in this kingdom of

angels? Is there aught in common between it and us? Yes, blessed be God, we have one King. There is one King for the seen and the unseen—the world of spirits, and the world of men. One took our nature, having passed by the angelic nature, and He is now above all angels. So that not an angel, but a man, having flesh and bones as we have, rules all the hosts of heaven, and restrains all the hosts of hell.

If, then, we are heirs of salvation, we are interested in all their good offices. Because they serve Him Who is the Head, they delight to serve us who are His members. We shall not know, till we enjoy their conscious companionship, how very much we owe to their care and watchfulness.

And they and we are alike inexpressibly interested in one matter pertaining to the glory of this their King and ours, and that one thing is the Gospel of the King—the message of the salvation of sinners by His Incarnation, Death, Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven. Nor is it a mere surmise, or devout opinion, that the angels look with intense interest on the work of the Gospel. It is expressly stated that the angels desire to look into the things which are preached to us sinners. The Redemption, which so many sinful men are indifferent about, the angels desire to look into.

If, then, you are indifferent to, and careless about Redemption, you are indifferent to, and

careless about that which excites the wonder and love of the highest intelligences. You are careful about the most miserable trifles, and careless about that which will make an eternal difference in your lot in the world of spirits.

But if you are abiding in Christ, then, tremendous though the realities of the unseen world be, you have nothing to fear from them. When the angel met the women, terrified and affrighted, at the sepulchre, he encouraged them with the words, "Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified." And when your eyes are opened to behold what is now invisible, they will welcome you with like words, "Fear not ye, for we know that ye have sought, and have found, and love and serve Jesus who was crucified."

X.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD SUPERNATURAL.

HEBREWS xii. 22—25.

“Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.”

WHO are they to whom words such as these could be spoken? Surely such things as these could only be spoken to those who had passed through their state of probation, and had safely entered into their eternal rest. If ever words can describe the glories of the Church triumphant, the immeasurable multitude before the Throne, clothed in white with palms of victory in their hands, it must surely be such words as these. For how could you describe the blessedness of a saint in heaven in more fitting terms than these, that he is come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; that he partakes of the fellowship of perfected spirits, and of the holy angels, and that he is able to stand in the presence of God the Judge.

And yet these glorious things are not spoken to the Church triumphant, but to the members of Christ's Church militant here on earth; they are not addressed to those in a state of glory, but to those in a state of grace; they are not addressed to disembodied spirits of the just who have fought their fight and finished their course, and have their crown assured to them, but to men in flesh and blood, and so in danger of falling away.

Now, do you doubt this? Do you think that such things could not be said to any here in bodies of sin and death? Do you ask, "If such things be true of Christians here, what difference is there between earth and heaven?" Perhaps you have stood by the bedside of a dying Christian, and have heard him express his hopes of a speedy entrance into glory by these very words. You have heard him say, "I shall soon be at the Mount Sion, in the city of the living God. I shall soon be one of the Church of the firstborn, amidst the innumerable company of angels, joining in their never-ending song.

You have reason to ask "Can it be said of any here that they have come to such things?"

But that it *is* said—that these wondrous things are predicated of men on this side of death and judgment—you have only to examine the words before and after the words of the text, and you can convince yourself. For the souls in Paradise are safe; they have fought

their fight, they have kept the faith; they have been obedient unto death, and none can now take from them their crown of life; whereas the words of the text are said to persons who are not as yet safe from falling—nay, who are in actual danger of falling away.

See, I beseech you, if this be not so. I say that the words of the text are addressed to those who are in danger from their own disobedience, for though they have come to the Mount Sion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the company of angels, the presence of the Judge, the blood of Jesus—yet to these very persons who had come to all this, it is yet said, “See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.”

And more than this too. The writer, holy and inspired though he was, seems to speak as if he himself shared in the danger, for he proceeds, “If they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not *we* escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven.” Now with this agrees all that had gone before. The Apostle throughout this chapter speaks to the same persons. He begins with exhorting the Hebrew Christians, because they are running a heavenly race, to lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset them; he proceeds to bid them look diligently, lest any fall from God’s grace, after the example of Esau, who lost his birth-

right, because he in his profanity looked upon it as a thing of no value, not worth a mess of pottage. Then comes the immediate context of the passage I have taken as my text. In this the Apostle calls to their remembrance the circumstances of terror connected with the giving of the law, which of course betokened its unyielding severity, and bids those for whose benefits he writes "not to refuse" the voice of God speaking to them, no longer in thunder and earthquake and tempest of fire, but from the very mercy-seat of heaven itself, with everything to reassure, and encourage, and invite. "Ye are not come," he says, "unto the Mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which so terrible voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: but ye are—ye *have*, rather—come to the Mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, the spirits of the perfected just, the blood of Jesus: see that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven."

Here, then, we have the two states or dispensations—the Jewish state, before Christ's

coming, and the Christian, after it, contrasted; the one terror, the other peace; the one Mount Sinai, the other Mount Sion; the one earthly, the other heavenly; but though the states themselves are contrasted, the condition of the men in these two states or dispensations is, in one most important particular, the same. Each are on their trial. God speaks to each, and each—those under the Law and under the Gospel, under Mount Sinai, and under Mount Sion—have to listen to God's voice, and to obey it.

Nay, those who have come to Mount Sion and to the heavenly Jerusalem, because of the greater grace with which they are encompassed, have the more to fear, for he concludes, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved"—that is, it will never, like that which preceded it, grow old, vanish away, and have to give place to another—"let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire."

How can these things be? How can the state of probation upon earth be described in terms which seem rather to suit the state of glory in heaven? how can they who are surrounded with such tokens of the favour and power of God be in danger of falling from God?

Whether we can explain these things or not is of comparatively little moment. We see

that they are so. Yet surely all this is hard to accept, and when accepted hard to realise.

Now instead of asking "How can all this be?" would it not be better to ascertain first how it is that we have any difficulty about it, seeing that it is clearly revealed?

May there not be a moral difficulty, a difficulty arising from the state of our own hearts? May we not fear, naturally fear, to have God, and Christ, and the angelic spirits, and the spirits of the just, so very near to us as such a view of our state would require? Because we are unholy we fear the immediate presence of such holiness; and so, in spite of the universal teaching of Holy Scripture, we take refuge in views of Christ's Church, and of our present state of grace, which excludes from them, as far as possible, everything which is supernatural and heavenly.

We desire that Christianity should be a system, like any other system of learning or philosophy—heavenly it may be, in its origin, but still now only acting on men's minds and hearts according to those natural laws of cause and effect with which we are familiar. The most of us are loth to look upon it as anything more than an organised system of teaching to enforce certain truths on the mind, such as the character and attributes of God, and the willingness of God to forgive sin through Jesus Christ.

If we go further than this, and recognise the

ever present help of God's Holy Spirit, we limit the action of this Blessed Agent to the stirring up of our affection or the implantation of a new affection.

And undoubtedly, all this is a great and necessary work. It is a great work to inform the mind with views of God, and Christ, and Eternity, which enable the illiterate peasant to grasp and master what philosophers of old were groping in the dark about; and it is a great work to bring such motives as the love of Christ so to act on the heart that the love of everything contrary to God and goodness is cast out and destroyed.

But surely it implies something more than a system of teaching, however enlightening and elevating—surely it requires something more than a system of motives, however purifying and heart-constraining, to account for an Apostle saying to men in flesh and blood, “Ye have come to the Mount Sion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the general assembly and church of the first-born, and to an innumerable company of angels.”

Now, if the text were a solitary instance of such a mode of speaking it might be called hyperbolical, or enthusiastic, or highly figurative; but the New Testament is full of such language. Let me call a few instances to your remembrance; and they shall all be of a similar character, they shall all describe the present

state of grace in which the Christian is struggling and warring with sin and evil, in terms similar to those of the text; that is, in terms implying, notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary, its heavenly and supernatural character. In one place of God's Word our citizenship is said to be *in heaven* (Phil. iii. 20). In another, God is said to have "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephes. ii. 6). In a third, Christians are reminded that they are "the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them" (2 Cor. vi. 16). Then Christians are "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;" they are part of an edifice, which "in Christ being fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord," and they are "builded together for an habitation of God" (Ephes. ii. 19-22).

Now these expressions (some of them at least) go much further than the text; for the text merely declares that Christians have *come* to the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem; whereas we are taught by the places which I have just cited that Christians dwelling on earth in the flesh compose the heavenly Jerusalem; they are the living stones of a spiritual building erected for the habitation of God Himself.

They who look upon Christianity as merely

a system of teaching, for informing the mind, or even a system intended simply to bring certain higher motives to act on the heart, cannot possibly enter into the depth of such expressions as these. Such expressions imply no less than a new, mysterious, and spiritual relationship betwixt the ever blessed Trinity on the one hand, and the body of men, called by the name of Christ, on the other.

And when we come to look into the matter we find that the whole state of things in which the Christian is, his entrance into that state, his life, so far as it is spiritual or religious, and the means for preserving that life, are all described in terms which teach us their unearthly character.

The kingdom of which he is a subject is the "kingdom of heaven." He enters into it by a "new birth of water and of the Spirit." At the time of his entrance he is not merely dedicated to God, but baptized into the Body of Christ, and grafted into Christ as the True Vine. The continuance of this union is called his being "in" Christ. So that just as a branch is "in" or "abides in" a tree, so he, in some mysterious but real way, abides in One Who is at the right hand of God. So real is this abiding, notwithstanding its mysteriousness, assumed to be, that His members are called the members of Christ and His body the temple of the Holy Ghost; and they are accounted to

be such for no mere speculative or fanciful reasons, but in order that the ever-abiding sense of this nearness to Christ may keep him from the deadliest and most degrading sins. Such at least is the conclusion of the Apostle when he writes, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid."

So then we find that the New Testament abounds with intimations of the wonderful nature and extreme blessedness of the state in which the Christian now is, which compel us to receive in their fulness the words of the text.

If we have been in the habit of regarding the Church as merely an institution set up for the purpose of instructing men in what Christ did on their behalf, then it must seem strange and exaggerated to speak of its members as having already come to the city of the living God, and to an innumerable company of angels.

But if Christ be the "Word made Flesh," if the Eternal Son took upon Him our nature, in order that He might renew, sanctify, and exalt it, by communicating His own life-giving nature, His very flesh, which is the life of the world, to us His brethren, in order that we, who by our birth in the first Adam, were partakers of sin and death, by our new birth into

the Second Adam might be partakers of righteousness and life; if by having been grafted into Him we have become members of a body which includes all the saints of God, both those who are alive and those who are asleep; if our risen Head be the Lord of angels as well as of us His brethren; if angels delight in mixing amongst us, and assisting us upon earth because of our being one with Him Whom in heaven they see and adore; if God has made peace through the Blood of Christ's Cross, and the fountain of that Blood is ever open to the faithful soul in the Sacraments of the Church, and in the right use of these we can always partake of its cleansing virtue, and plead it on earth in union with His own pleading of it at God's right hand,—if all these things be true, and we know by God's word that true they are, then it surely is no very strange thing for an Apostle to say to men, who have been in any sort made partakers of Christ, “Ye have come to the Mount Sion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.”

We are said to have come to these things because we have been brought into a state of things, or kingdom, in which our citizenship is in heaven and our fellowship with the whole redeemed family; and so we have come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the general assembly and church of the first-born. We have an interest in the good offices

of ministering spirits; they are present in our assemblies for worship, at our Eucharists, and so we have come to an innumerable company of angels. We have been grafted into Christ, and have been washed in His blood (1 Cor. vi. 11), and are among those for whom He intercedes; nay, we join our intercession with His, and so we have come to "Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling."

But all such explanations are cold. We have lost our faith in the great things pertaining to the mystical body, and with our faith our fervour. They of old glowed with a living fire when they spake of the nearness of heaven to earth through the coming of Christ. Hear one of them. He is speaking of the Gospel being good tidings.

"God," he says, "hath properly called His work by a name which signifies good tidings. Yea, for it was removal of punishment, and remission of sins, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, and adoption, and an inheritance of heaven, and a relationship unto the Son of God, which He came declaring unto all,—to enemies, to the perverse, to them that were sitting in darkness. What then could ever be equal to these good tidings? God on earth, man in heaven; and all became mingled together. Angels joined the choirs of men, men had fellowship with the angels, and with

the other powers above; and one might see the long war brought to an end, and reconciliation made between God and our nature, the devil brought to shame, demons in flight, death destroyed, Paradise opened, the curse blotted out, sin put out of the way, error driven off, truth returning, the word of godliness everywhere sown, and flourishing in its growth, the polity of those above planted on the earth, those powers in secure intercourse with us, and on earth angels continually haunting, and hope abundant touching things to come." *

We have come to all this, but we are not as yet safe. We have come within the sound of the voice of Christ, but we have to hear His voice for ourselves, and to receive His words as the words of eternal life.

In innumerable ways He speaks to us. He invites, He calls, He commands, He threatens. He speaks to us in the secret whispers of conscience, in the solitude and stillness of the night, in the providences that meet us at every turn, in bereavements, in disappointments, in crosses, in afflictions, in necessities. He tells us that there is a rest for His people from all these, nay, in them all, and bids us cast in our lot with His faithful ones. In weariness and pain, in tossings to and fro on the sick bed, in watchings by the sick beds of those whose pains are sharper to us than our own; in all

* Chrysostom on Matthew, Homily I.

these we may, if we will, hear His voice inviting us to make good our place in a city where God will wipe away all tears.

But above all His voice is heard in the ordinances of His own kingdom, in the streets, the places of concourse of His Zion. There He cries aloud, He spares not, He lifts up His voice.

He speaks in the text which sticks in the memory like a barbed arrow, which no effort can shake off, and no earthly draught can drown its pain.

Most lovingly does His voice sound in the invitation to the Sacrament of His Body. The very sight of the table spread and decked for the heavenly feast is His voice to many, to remind them that He must be their Bread of Life if they would live for ever, and that they must stretch out their hands, and receive each one for himself the Body of the Lord if they are to have His life in them.

XI.

CHRIST KNOWN ONLY BY FAITH.

JOHN i. 26.

“There standeth One among you whom ye know not.”

WE are told by a heathen author, that at the time when the Son of God was about to come amongst us there was a sort of presentiment among the people dwelling in eastern regions, that one was coming who was to have the dominion, that is, some sort of universal dominion; but of the nature of this dominion none could speak. The sacred narrative, as contained in the four Gospels, fully proves the truth of the statement of the Gentile writer. Many incidents in the narrative, with more or less clearness, teach us that some one was then expected, and there was a feverish anxiety respecting any one who might happen to be the centre of any religious movement, as to whether he was the one for whom all looked. St. John the Baptist was, as the Gospel for this day teaches us, the subject of this anxiety. He was preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and baptizing men with water, and he excited by his preaching a prodigious stir among the dry bones of

dead Judaism. Multitudes from all parts of the Holy Land flocked to hear his preaching, and to receive his baptism. Upon this the leaders of the Jewish religion in Jerusalem sent to him with such questions as, Who art thou? Art thou Elias? Art thou that prophet? Why baptizest thou if thou be not Christ, or Elias, or that prophet? John, in answer to all this, disclaimed all personal honour. He declared that he was but a voice—a voice to announce the coming of Another; a fore-runner to herald His near approach; but, besides this, he assured them that the One Whose coming all men were hoping for was actually in their midst: “There standeth one among you whom ye know not.”

But St. John did not stop here. He went on further to assure them that there was an absolutely immeasurable distance between this unknown One and himself: “He it is Who, coming after me, is preferred before me, Whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.”

Let us dwell for a moment upon these words, in which the Holy Baptist describes the enormous distance betwixt himself and One Who was his near relative after the flesh.

St. John was by birth of the very first family among the Jews.* He was the son of one of

* In illustration of this we find Josephus, the Jewish historian, commencing the history of his life thus: “The family from which I am derived is not an ignoble one, but hath

the heads of the courses of the priests, among whom the high priesthood was, as it were, divided. If, then, St. John had chosen to dwell in Jerusalem, after the death of his father Zacharias, he might have presided at the highest acts of national religious worship. In addition to this, St. John was a great man through the inherent force of his own moral and religious life and character. He was apparently raised up to set on foot a great religious reformation amongst his countrymen. In bringing this about he took upon himself to denounce in terms of the most unsparing invective the hypocrisy of those who filled the highest places in the eyes of his co-religionists. "Oh! generation of vipers," he says to the leaders of the then religious world, "who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Here then was one who, we may be sure, would bend before no human being. We know how, shortly after, he reproved a king, who had the power of life and death in his hands, and how he lost his life for his boldness. And yet this man, of such a family, with such popularity, so bold, so uncompromising, so fearless of the frown of his fellow-creatures, declares that there is One amongst the surrounding crowd

descended all along from the priests; and as nobility among several people is of a different origin, so with us, to be of the sacerdotal dignity is an indication of the splendour of a family."

for Whom he was unworthy to perform the most menial office—"whose shoe's latchet he was not worthy to unloose." Surely this, said by one who, of all men, would not flatter or cringe, who was withal an inspired messenger of God, must betoken an infinite distance. And we know that it does; at least we are inexcusable if we do not. For to that unknown One we have all of us been offering up this morning nothing short of Divine worship. Some of us met early this morning, to shew forth before God, angels, and men His death of shame, and to partake in some mystical, but not the less real, way of His Flesh and Blood. All of us have, throughout the service of prayer and praise, been addressing Him as if He could hear us, which He can, and as if He could answer us, which He can. We have sung to His special praise the words "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ! Thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father. . . . Thou sittest at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father. We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge. We therefore pray Thee help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood. Make them to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting."

We have also besought Him, "by the mystery of His Holy Incarnation; by His Holy Nativity and Circumcision; by His Baptism, Fasting, and Temptation: by His Agony and Bloody

Sweat: by His Cross and Passion: by His precious Death and Burial: by His Glorious Resurrection and Ascension," to deliver us.

What an amazing contrast! Here is a poor unhonoured Man in a vast crowd of others, nobody, except one, knowing Who He is; and here are churches at the ends of the earth meeting together in His Name, calling themselves by His Name, so associating His Name with the Name of God Himself, as to address God as the Father of this Man, and to believe that we His worshippers are the children of God, not by nature, but because we are mystically and spiritually *in* this Man, though He is now far above all Heavens, at the right hand of God. Here we are in this very house of God, calling upon this Man for help; help, too, not in some temporal distress, but in the matter of the present transformation and eternal salvation of our souls: singing His praises, trusting only in His death, and expecting, we know not how soon, to stand before Him, to be judged by Him for the deeds done in our bodies.

I said that one man only knew who this unknown One was, and expressed his sense of the difference betwixt himself and Christ by the words, "whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." But this very confession of St. John's unworthiness, as compared with the dignity of the unknown One, we now feel to be utterly inadequate.

If we heard any professing Christian now express himself in no stronger terms than these we should be shocked and offended ; because we should feel even such terms to be much too measured to express the infinite difference between the Divine and the merely human—between the truly and essentially Divine, of which the higher nature of Christ partakes in all its fulness, and the merely human nature which is all to which the greatest and best of the sons of Adam can lay claim. We have, in fact, been, using, all through our service this morning, very much stronger language, betokening a far greater gulf betwixt Christ's higher nature and ours ; as for instance when we said that we believed Him to be “ very God of very God, begotten, not made.” When we confessed this, we confessed, of course, what was far beyond the confession of the Holy Baptist ; for we have acknowledged that we believe that He possesses in its fulness the nature and dignity of Almighty God—that He is uncreated, infinite, and eternal.

Now, my friends, is it not astonishing to think that such a One should stand unrecognised and unknown in the world which He had Himself made, and amongst the people whom He Himself had chosen ? Unknown and unrecognised, except by one who himself confesses that he should not have known Him except by a sign revealed to him from God, Who had said to

him, "Upon Whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." It is an astonishing thing, I say, that such a One should not be recognised, and yet, when we come to consider it, we see at once that so long as Jesus lived amongst us as one of ourselves, He could not be recognised as the Eternal Son. If God condescends to be the companion of men in flesh and blood He must hide His glory from their eyes, or how could they abide it for a moment?

On two occasions did Jesus Christ suffer His Divine glory to shine in its full splendour through the veil of His human nature: once to Saul of Tarsus, and he was taken up from the earth utterly blinded; and once at Patmos, to the beloved Disciple who had lain in His bosom, and he fell at His feet as one dead. Well, then, seeing that none could realise Him as the Eternal God, so long as He dwelt amongst us in a body of flesh and blood, why were men blamed for not believing in Him? He Himself most assuredly insisted upon the necessity of their believing on Him. "If ye believe not that I am He ye shall die in your sins. Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." What, then, were men called upon to believe about Him?

Now we shall find that in this matter of belief in Christ, God acted towards men with

the most merciful consideration. He did not reveal the whole truth as it is in Jesus to all men at once, but gradually, very gradually, as men were able to bear such a blaze of light. The first thing which God required men to accept was, simply, that Christ came from God—that He was the Messiah—the Prophet whom all men looked for. First of all, His miracles, which were done in the sight of all, were such that men were forced to ask, “Who is this that can do such things? The winds and the sea obey Him. The very devils are subject to Him. The most inveterate form of disease vanishes at His touch—rather at His word or look. He gives feet to the lame, hearing to the deaf, sight to the blind. Above all, He makes His voice to be heard in the regions of departed spirits; for He calls to the dead and their souls re-enter their bodies, and they come forth from the grave itself. By whose power does He do all these things?” Well; all that He does is manifestly on the side of God and goodness. His whole life is given to the glory of God and the welfare of man. He preaches in words such as never fell on men’s ears before; and His preaching is upon repentance, judgment, holiness, purity, peace, and love. And what He preaches His whole life enforces: the strictest holiness, joined with the most untiring love of God and man. A few believe on Him. And yet even in them how strange the mixture of

belief and unbelief. Sometimes He commends them for their faith, but oftener, far oftener, has He to upbraid them for their unbelief. One of them, and in the name of his brethren, confessed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Surely we should have said, This must be, indeed, all the faith that could be asked of him. What could he say more? For if Christ be the true Son of God, He must fully partake of all the glories of His Father's nature, for Sonship implies that the Father imparts of His whole nature to the Son whom He begets. What then could Peter say more? But a very little time after this, when Jesus proceeds to tell them that He must be delivered to the Gentiles and be crucified, that is, suffer at the hands of the Gentiles the most painful and degrading of Gentile punishments, this same St. Peter answers, "Be it far from Thee, Lord." "Be it far from Thee," that is, "to endure that for which Thou camest into the world—to offer up Thyself a sacrifice for our sins." So that you see Simon Peter believed that in some high sense He was the Son of the Living God, and yet did not believe that by His death He was to expiate sin.

Again, just before His Crucifixion, Christ gave thanks on behalf of His Apostles for their perseverance in belief. And we learn from the words of Christ's prayer, that what the Disciples believed was simply that He had "come out

from God," and that God had sent Him. His words are, "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me ; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me."

Thus was it during the time that Christ was on earth. Even of the Twelve it could be said with truth, "There was One among them whom they knew not." They followed Him, it is true—faithfully and lovingly followed Him. One of them, who spake for all, said, in all sincerity, "Lo, we have left all and followed Thee." When He went into danger another said, "Let us go up with Him, that we may also die with Him." But they contradicted Him at times. They remonstrated—they even doubted His power after He had performed one stupendous act of supernatural power, in feeding five thousand with food hardly enough for five ; they forgot it, and asked again, "Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness as to fill so great a multitude?"

But all this passed away with His own departure. The full consciousness of His Essential Godhead began to dawn upon them as He was about to leave them. Then one of them broke out with the exclamation, "My Lord and my God." Then they worshipped Him, and when He was finally withdrawn, then, and not till then, did they set forth His fullness—

that He was the One Mediator between God and men—that He was the Prince of Life—that His Blood cleanseth from all sin—that His Flesh was the food of Eternal Life—that He was God over all—ruling all events, hearing all prayer, and making all things work together for good to them that love God.

When they no longer saw Him, then did they understand Who He was with Whom they had gone in and out. Then they knew that they had seen, and heard, and talked with God. One of them, speaking for his brethren as well as for himself, said, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life. . . . That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."

They declared, that is, how they had seen the form and the countenance, and heard the words and observed the works of the Very and Eternal Son and Word of God. They told their fellow-men *how* He had lived, and *what* He had said.

And now, my friends, during this week we shall, if God spares us, celebrate the festival of the coming amongst us of Him Whom Apostles themselves knew not so long as they saw Him with eyes of flesh.

Wonderful truth! He was not known by the eye of sense; He became known by the eye of faith. As long as men saw Him they knew

Him not—the transcendent greatness of His Person and work was hidden from them. When they ceased to see Him then they knew Him.

And, my brethren, we shall each of us one day see Him for ourselves. And if we are to bear the sight of Him *then*, we must know Him *now*.

And we are under no disadvantage, because we now see Him not ; nay, rather we have some especial advantages over those who saw Him. “Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.”

We can know Christ far more perfectly now by His Spirit, working in and by His Word, His Sacraments, His Ministers, His Providences, than if we had seen Him when He lived upon earth, and had been privileged to hear His words and behold His wonderful works. If we had seen Him as He was in the eyes of His own generation, the very sight of such humiliation would have been a hindrance to us in realising the nature of His salvation.

But now He has gone, that we may, by the power of His Spirit, realise His Omnipresence, which we could hardly have done had we seen Him locally dwelling in some earthly city. For, marvellous and blessed truth, His very absence is the condition and the pledge of His presence. He is gone, that He may be with us. Nothing can be plainer than His declarations that He never leaves His Church, “Lo, I am with

you alway, even unto the end of the world ;” “ Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” “ Yet a little while and the world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me.” “ I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you.” True Christians, who have any living faith in them, and partake of Christ’s Sacraments, are now in Him according to His words, “ He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me and I in Him.”

There is then, my brethren, One amongst you ; even He to whom St. John bore witness ; but, blessed be God, we cannot say of all, “ Whom ye know not ;” for some—it may be but a few—yet still some of you know Him ; and others are beginning to discern His presence and grace.

There is One amongst us Whom we must know, if we would be saved from sin, and be happy for ever ; for He says, “ This is life eternal, that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent ;” and again, His Spirit working in His Apostle says, “ I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . . that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection.” We have come into the same world into which He came that we may know Him. We have been gathered in our earliest infancy into His Church in order

that we may know Him. We have the word of His gospel preached to us by His ministers in order that, coming to Him, we may know Him. We are invited to the Communion of His Body and Blood, in order that, eating His Flesh and drinking His Blood, we may dwell in Him, and He in us, and so we may know Him still more intimately and perfectly.

We should hate and flee from all that is sinful and defiling, because, as His servant St. John tells us, "He that sinneth doth not see Him, neither know Him."

No longer, then, are these words of St. John, we trust, true, for another St. John hath written, "The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and Eternal Life."

XII.

CHRIST SPEAKING WITH AUTHORITY.

ST. MATTHEW v. 2, 3.

“He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven: Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”

WHEN our Lord had finished the sermon of which these words are the opening, it is said by the Evangelist that “the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority.” “He taught the people as one having authority.” What authority? We who are ministers of the Church speak with some authority, but then that authority is not our own. We speak on the authority of God’s word, as interpreted by the Church in the primitive ages. We cannot but hold that it is safer to give the interpretations of the earliest ages, if such interpretations are in existence, than those of later ages, because the earlier we go for the meaning of Scripture, the nearer we are to the teaching of the Apostles themselves.

If the faith which we hold be, as it is, the faith once delivered to the Saints, it seems to be the safest to hold fast to those forms of it in which it was cast the earliest after its first

delivery. Anyhow, we who preach to you desire to speak, not with our own authority, but with the authority of the written word, and, as far as we can ascertain it, with that interpretation of it which is most in accordance with the mind of the Spirit, because the interpretation of that Church in which dwells the Spirit.

Besides this, we who belong to a Church which appeals at every turn to the authority of Holy Scripture, always go through the form, at least, of taking a text before we begin to preach, which text we expound, or which serves as the foundation of our remarks. The mere form of doing this is useful; it is a fitting homage to the dignity of Holy Scripture as the written word of God, as "all given by inspiration of God."

Now the sermon which opens with the words of the text stands in very great contrast to all this, for not only is there no appeal in it to the written Word of God, but the preacher, Jesus Christ Himself, at times seems almost to set aside the most sacred words of the Old Covenant; at least He enlarges upon them, and extends their scope and meaning, and that on His own authority, in a way which no mere human teacher who feared God would have dared to do. Nothing can be more certain than this, though in our authorized English translation it is not so prominent as in the original. When, for instance, we read "Ye

have heard that it was said *by* them of old time ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ but I say unto you—” the words, if strictly rendered, should be, “Ye have heard that it was said *to* them of old time, but *I* say unto you,” that is, God on Mount Sinai said to them of old time, “Thou shalt not kill,” but *I* say unto you, “That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.” Now how astounding, when we consider it, is the assumption of superhuman authority displayed in all this. You observe that our Saviour claims to expand and amplify the very decalogue itself. It is as if He said, “Ye have heard that God said to your fathers ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ and whilst your fathers and you lived in an imperfect state of things, in which was no pouring forth of the Spirit, this simple command might be enough, but a new state of things has come in. I, the Son of God, and the Wisdom of God, am come among you, and I have come to raise you up into a far higher state of religion than that which your fathers enjoyed. I have come to bring you near to God, in a way of grace which your fathers never could have imagined, and the nearer you are to God the holier and better you must be, and so it is not enough that it should be said to you, Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt love thy neighbour. I say unto you, Every

one that is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. I say unto you that ye resist not evil. I say unto you that every one that looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. I say unto you, love your enemies."

All this is a new law, and it was given forth *as if it was new*. The speaker is conscious that there was a very wide difference between His sayings and the sayings "to them of old." Such sayings as His, deepening, amplifying, almost transforming the precepts of the old law; such sayings required some authority, and that authority He asserted, not once, or twice either, but many times; not obscurely, inferentially, or with hesitation, but with the utmost conceivable strength of self-assertion: "I say unto you." "Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from ME." "Whosoever heareth these sayings of *mine*, and doeth them, I will liken him to a wise man which built his house upon a rock."

The greatest preacher of antiquity, St. Chrysostom, noticed this: "Seest thou," he says, "authority in perfection? Seest thou a bearing suited to a legislator? Why, which among Prophets ever spake in this wise? which among righteous men? which among Patriarchs? None; but 'Thus saith the Lord,' But the Son not so. [And why?] Because they were

publishing their Master's commands, He His Father's; and when I say 'His Father's,' I mean His own; 'For Mine,' saith He, 'are Thine, and Thine are Mine.' And they had their fellow-servants to legislate for, He His own servants." Yes, truly one may add, it is the voice of a Son over His own house.

I have dwelt at some length on the authoritative tone assumed by our Saviour throughout this sermon, in order to convince you how impossible it is to separate the morality of the Gospel from its highest mysteries. If Christ appears anywhere as a moral teacher, it is in this sermon, but if we are worshippers of the one living and true God, before we can accept this teaching we must realise how it is that a meek and humble man can speak with such astonishing self-assertion. A heathen prophet has taught us that one of the first requirements of the natural law is, that we should "walk humbly with God." How, then, can we learn to fear God even, from One Who sets His own words side by side with those of God? We all, who hold the Catholic faith, know how this can be. We know the mystery, that He who had assumed for our sakes the form of a servant had been from all eternity in the form of God. We know, then, that the authority with which He spake was nothing less than the authority which had originally given the law. What He had once given, that He had a right to extend,

to deepen, to transform into a better rule; if need be, to set aside.

So that you see to realise His authority as a moral teacher we must perforce realise the dignity of His Person as the Eternal Son of the Most High.

And now let me draw your attention to another side of this amazing authority with which the Son of Man spake, in that He pronounced blessed such characters as the poor-spirited, the mournful, the meek, the merciful.

Suppose for a moment that we had no Bible, and no Christian revelation, and that I, or any other professed teacher, were to rise up and say: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven," "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." You would assuredly be justified in interrupting me, and asking "What right had I to make any such assertion?" for in saying such a thing I am going directly in the teeth of all the teaching, and of all the experiences, of this world, and I am laying down the rule by which retribution will be awarded in the next.

What advantage has a poor, retiring, humble, diffident spirit in the great battle of this world? Why such an one gets pity, and that is all. The pushing, the forward, the self-confident man, *as a rule*, gets on; he never loses a thing for want of asking; he sets a high value on his own opinion, or his own ser-

vices, and lets his neighbours know it; and most people take him at his word; at least a sufficient number to enable him to win his way by their means; whereas the poor-spirited, that is, the man who thinks little of himself, and is too retiring and humble to push himself forward, gets trodden upon by the crowd, and falls far behind in the race of life. Such, I think, you will all acknowledge, is the experience of the world. Providence, or Christianity, or what we call accident, may alter this in some cases, but the current of this world is assuredly in favour of self-assertion and self-confidence. It requires, then, that a man should speak with an authority which no knowledge of this world can give if he is to stand up amongst his fellows and proclaim, "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

But does the Saviour stop here? Does He not go on to say, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Does He not postpone the blessedness till the future world and the coming of the Judge? He may do so; but consider for a moment what authority is required for a man to say this even, for it simply amounts to His saying that the world to come is the very opposite to this; for whereas the rewards of this world are usually won by self-assertion in some form or other, the rewards of the world to come will be won by self-abasement. So that when the Saviour and Judge says, "Blessed

are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," He most unequivocally sets forth that the whole state and condition of human society will be reversed in the eternal world, for the self-confident and the self-asserting have the best of this world, whereas the poor in spirit will possess the eternal kingdom.

What, you will say, will the respectable, the well-to-do children of earth, those whose fashions we imitate, whose words we repeat, whose mere word or nod of recognition we so covet, will they have to fall back into the common herd, if they do not lose their souls altogether, and a set of poor humble-spirited people, who have never thought anything of themselves, and have never been thought of either, will they be summoned to the front, and have the first places of the kingdom assigned to them by the very Judge Himself?

Yes, my brethren, something like this is what we mean—rather, it is what Christ Himself engages to bring about, as Himself the Judge. Indeed, He says it, in some shape or other, over and over again, as, for instance, when He says on three separate occasions, "The last shall be first and the first last." What is the teaching of such a parable as that of the Rich Man and Lazarus, except this, that all in this world will be reversed in the world to come. This, too, is the teaching of His servant, St. James, when that Apostle actually calls upon

the rich man to "rejoice in that he is made low." The rich man needs to be saved from the natural effect of his riches. His possessions give him an importance in his own eyes and in the eyes of his neighbours which cannot but be hurtful to his soul. Now the Gospel saves him from this, but it saves him by bringing down his self-esteem. Such truths as the Incarnation; that is, the Eternal Son stripping Himself of all, and living the life of a servant; such truths as the absolute equality of all men in the sight of the great Judge, if received with any faith, make the rich man low, because they make him measure himself, not by the standard of the world, but by that of Christ; and so they enable him to receive the first blessing which Christ pronounces—the blessing on the poor in spirit.

And now, before we proceed, let me put in two words by way of caution.

1. I need, I trust, hardly direct attention to the fact, that Christ here pronounces a blessing not absolutely on the poor, but on the poor in spirit. There may be two men, both equally poor, both working at the same trade, going to the same church, and one may receive the blessing of the Saviour, and the other be without it, because the one may be full of his own superior knowledge, or ability, or fluency of speech, or skill in his occupation, and the other, taught by the Gospel and the Spirit, may be nothing in

his own eyes, but may in lowliness of mind esteem all around him better than himself.

2. Then, in the next place, I do not think that our Saviour by the poor in spirit means those who, in the language of the religious world, are convinced of sin; for He refers not so much to a transient as to a permanent state of heart, a state to which what is called conviction of sin by no means universally leads.

Poverty of spirit, upon which Christ here pronounces His blessing, is much more than confessing our own unworthiness and the need of a higher righteousness than our own in which to stand before God. Many, many are most loud in their professions of their own unworthiness, and of the all-sufficiency of Christ, and are most confident of their acceptance in Him, whose every word and feature betray their self-satisfaction.

True poverty of spirit, and professions of reliance on the finished work of Christ, by no means go together, and it is equally true that in the most humble-minded believer there may be a well-grounded confidence in his own sincerity. One who desired to be found only in Christ could yet write, and in the very same letter, "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do."

Our natural righteousness may be as "filthy rags"; but if God be working in us by His

Spirit, we must beware how we call the work of God within us by any such a name. We confess in our Creed, "So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and *the Holy Ghost Almighty*," and surely if the Spirit be Almighty, He can make a good man. If it could be said of two Jews living before the birth of Christ, that they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, surely the same may be said of some Christians, now that the Son of God has come, and the Incarnation is revealed, and the life of Jesus written, and we are in His Church and partakers of His Sacraments. Will such then boast of what they are or of what they do? Assuredly not, but they will be equally careful lest, out of a voluntary humility which ends in spiritual pride, they run down the work of God within themselves. Their mind will be, in the words of the Apostle, to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God who worketh in them to will and to do of His good pleasure."

The next blessing pronounced by our Lord requires an authority far beyond any authority of this world to assert it, much more to give effect to it.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Consider for a moment how all the elements

of this world—I mean all its experience, its opinions, its feelings, its hopes and aspirations, are against our believing such a thing.

“Cursed are they that mourn,” the world, perhaps, does not say, but “unhappy are they that mourn,” the world assuredly does say; and its one work is to prolong the day of pleasure, and to chase away the day of mourning. Why, for instance, do all men strive to be rich? In order that, having this world’s good, they may not suffer the evils of poverty, or if they must suffer poverty, have as much as possible to alleviate it.

Again, why does the world make a business of pleasure and amusement? Because it hates serious thought, for serious thought must end in mourning. Men cannot seriously consider what sin is doing on all sides of them, and not at times be very sorrowful.

“Oh!” but says the world, “we amuse ourselves because otherwise time would hang heavy.” Time hang heavy upon you? What is the meaning of such words on the lips of a creature who lives and moves and has his being in God, and who is, or can be, conscious of it? Time hanging heavy on a creature who has, at the longest, so short a time to prepare for so long an eternity. Time hanging heavy! What can such a phrase mean. Why it means that when men have nothing to do they are forced to think, and thinking, somehow, always gets

them on the future, and the future lands them in thoughts of death, judgment, heaven and hell, and this makes them feel serious, and will certainly make them, if they pursue such thoughts, come face to face with God, and then it will be with them as with Job, "They will abhor themselves and repent." They will be exceedingly sorrowful; they will weep bitterly. Now the men and women of the world have no desire to be brought thus face to face with the realities of their condition, and so they make a very business of pleasure and amusement, and all to quench serious thought, and drive away sorrow and grief.

It is the one business of the world: the world of business, of pleasure, nay, even of art and literature, so far as these things are unsanctified by religion, to drive them away.

Now, in opposition to all this, the Judge of the world pronounces His second blessing on the mourners. He calls them blessed whom the world pities and avoids. And mark, I beseech you, the reason He vouchsafes, "They shall be comforted."

Now the world knows that in a certain sense misfortunes and losses, and the griefs and unhappiness which follow, are of great use in shewing to men what they are. A heathen philosopher could say, "If you have not been an unhappy man, I am sure you are so: if you have travelled the stage of life without the

opportunity of encountering an adversary, nobody can know what your strength is, no not even yourself." So that the world knows the uses of adversity. Our greatest poet sang, "Sweet are the uses of adversity," and this, as I said, because adversity tries us, of what metal we are, and so contributes to our self-knowledge. Or it acts as the frost does in these our colder climates. It braces a man so that he can endure more, and so fight the battle of life more bravely, and contend for its prizes at greater advantage.

But the world's use of adversity is, after all, "of the earth, earthy," whereas the Saviour says, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." He does not say, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they gain thereby self-knowledge," though that is true. He does not say, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they learn to pity and sympathise with all their mourning brethren," though that be true. He does not say, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they learn thereby the vanity of earthly things," though this be true. But he does say, "Blessed are they that mourn, *for they shall be comforted.*"

Now this certifies us as to what this sorrow or mourning is, which wins the blessing of the Judge. It is as if He said, "Blessed are they which sorrow with a godly sorrow unto repentance, for they shall be comforted with the joy

of forgiveness. Blessed are they that groan inwardly, and are in grief and distress through their conflict with sin, for they shall be rewarded with the crown of victory. Blessed are they that drink with Me of my cup, for they shall reign with Me in My kingdom. Blessed are they that mourn with Me for the sin and evil which they see on all sides, for they shall rejoice with Me in My final and eternal triumph over sin and evil."

Such are the beatitudes, the blessings of Christ. What the world blesses He rejects. What the world rejects He blesses.

And now, brethren, are we anxious about His blessing? You will rejoin, "How can you ask such a thing? Who is not anxious to be blessed by Christ?"

Stay. His blessing is upon humility, and it is not a pleasant thing to be humbled. His blessing is upon tears and sorrow, if they are for sin in ourselves or in others. His blessing is upon meekness, and upon such an earnest desire to be like Him that it is called by Him "hungering and thirsting after righteousness." His blessing is upon the exercise of mercy, the purifying of the heart, the healing of strife and divisions, the patient endurance of wrong for the sake of the right.

He speaks as one having all authority, and He has all power to fit us for receiving His blessing.

This, my brethren, is our one hope. He can change our very nature, and so make us fit to receive His blessing. Only it is a serious thing, you see, even to ask for it. Because, if we ask for His first blessing, it is asking Him to humble us, and that may be very hard for us to bear at first. And if we ask for His second blessing we ask for Him to grieve us, and make us sorry and ashamed, perhaps, for a time almost to break our hearts, and this we may be sure will be hard to bear. It is a serious thing to ask for the blessing of Christ, but it would be a very very serious thing indeed to be without it for ever.

XIII.

GIVING A PART OF TRUE WORSHIP.—
THE OFFERTORY.

1 CORINTHIANS, xvi. 2.

“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by in store, as God hath prospered him.”

As we have determined to introduce the gathering of alms from the whole congregation, by way of the weekly offertory, amongst you, I think that it may be well to consider to-day the grounds which we have for such a custom, in Scripture, in the laws of our branch of the Church, and in the reasonableness of the thing itself. In order to do this we have to consider—

1. The general duty of giving of your substance in the worship of Almighty God.

2. And the particular way in which opportunity is given for the discharge of this duty by the use of the weekly offertory.

First, as to the general duty.

The earliest records of the worship of God are such as these: “Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof,” an offering unto the Lord. “And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered

burnt offerings upon the altar." Again, "Abraham builded an altar unto the Lord, Who appeared unto him."

At first sight it seems that nothing could be plainer and simpler than such worship, nothing less gorgeous or elaborate ; no building, no courts, no choir, simply an altar, that is, a few stones put together, on which was offered a burnt-offering ; but what was the nature of the worship on this altar ? It was sacrifice. Now, this was no less than the surrender of valuable property—of the things in which the wealth of the men of that time mainly consisted.

Consider how this appears in the sacrifice which Noah offered.

The seven animals of each species of clean beasts were the only ones then in existence. They were the stock from which the whole habitable world was to be replenished. Each one must have had a value in the eyes of the family of Noah of which we can scarcely form a conception. So when Noah took of every clean beast and offered it upon the altar, he surrendered and gave up to God the flesh of creatures whose death must have very sensibly diminished the means of subsistence for himself and his family for many years.

Thus we see that the very worship of the patriarchs was the surrender of their substance.

We now come to the Jewish dispensation.

Here, too, we find that a leading feature of

this God-ordained system of worship was the surrender to God of that which was costly. I do not here allude to the fact that when the tabernacle had to be raised, or the temple to be built, the people willingly offered of their substance—so cheerfully and so abundantly that they brought far more than was wanted, and they had to be restrained from bringing more—but I rather allude to the worship in the temple or tabernacle itself. Take the first direction respecting worship in the book containing directions for Jewish ritual—Leviticus. The first direction given is for the burnt-offering, which is assumed to be a bullock, or a sheep, or goat, or if the worshipper cannot afford either of these, then a turtle-dove, or a young pigeon, was accepted instead.

It is not, of course, my purpose now to dwell upon the typical meaning of these sacrifices; how far, for instance, they signified that the sins of the offerer deserved the shedding of his own blood, instead of which God mercifully accepted the blood of the victim; and how far they typified the One all-atoning Victim. I have now simply to draw attention to the fact that they were true sacrifices on the part of the worshipper, inasmuch as the offering of them involved the surrender of his property.

Now this sacrifice, this surrender of one's own, was the very substance of the worship.

There was, as far as we can gather, no service of mere prayer, or praise, or psalmody, or preaching, as with us. Any prayers or praises which were offered up were the accompaniments of burnt-offerings and other offerings of things which cost the offerer more or less of his wealth.

Let me, also, remind you that special provision was made for the case of those who might dwell at some distance from Jerusalem. They were to appear before the Lord at the three great annual festivals, and it was expressly commanded that none of them were to appear before the Lord empty ; that is, without any gift or sacrifice ; so that, in the ordinarily prosperous times of the church and nation, every substantial head of a family brought, at least, three sheep, or their value, as offerings to the Lord at Jerusalem ; and this in addition to the tithes which were charged on his patrimony ; and in addition to the expenses of his three journeys and those of, perhaps, several members of his family to and from the city of David.

Such was the worship which God ordained, not only typical, devout, reverential, but in all cases, costly to the worshipper.

By the death of Christ all these sacrifices of bullocks and goats, being but the shadows of the One True Sacrifice, were for ever done away, and the one great memorial Rite of the

Christian religion, the Rite by which we are to show forth the Lord's Death till He comes, differs from all the patriarchal and Jewish sacrifices in this, that of itself it costs nothing, or next to nothing. The bread and wine presented at primitive communions at Corinth or Ephesus was nothing in the mere matter of costliness to the Christian worshippers, compared with the heifer, or even lamb, which the Jews, in old times, immolated on God's altar.

Was the sacrifice of our substance, then, to form no part of the worship of Christians? It would have been very improbable that God should have so ordained it, for consider for a moment what that redemption is, which is the foundation, so to speak, of all Christian worship, which we plead in every prayer, and commemorate in every Eucharist. It is a sacrifice to which all other sacrifices are as nothing, and less than nothing. The most costly of ancient offerings consisted in the destruction by death and by fire of brute, unreasoning creatures. The sacrificer, it is true, parted with his property, but he did not part with his life. He took the life of another, and that life a life comparatively valueless—whereas the Eternal Son of God first humbled Himself to take upon Him our flesh and blood, and with that flesh and blood a creature life; and then He, of His own free will, surrendered that life, amid sufferings so

intense that the prospect of them wrung from Him a sweat of blood.

And in the surrender of Himself He was to be our example as well as our expiatory Sacrifice. His very Crucifixion is not to supersede the need of our individual Crucifixion. He was crucified for sins not His own, that we, through His grace, may crucify lusts which are our own. Again, the example of His humiliation is used by the Apostle as the reason why Christians should give of their substance for the relief of other Christians. "Ye know," he writes, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be made rich."

In accordance with all this we find that His first followers, those whom He attached to His Own Person, gave up their all in order so to follow Him. That "all," it is true, would be what some men would account little, but it was their all. Again, we read that those first converted by their preaching, "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need." From all this it would only be likely that the Apostles should provide means in solemn worship for the giving of our substance for the cause of Christ, or for the relief of the poor whom He so closely identifies with Himself.

It would have been a strange thing if the

Jew had had means of exercising self-sacrifice in worship in the very cost of the victims which he offered, and if the Christian, the follower of One Who redeemed all mankind by the greatest conceivable sacrifice, had no means provided for him in the due use of which he might exercise self-denial and self-sacrifice.

In the New Testament, though no specific directions are given as to the celebration of Christian worship, yet we find that it is assumed that the Apostles had made, or would make, many regulations respecting the public services of the Church. They had, for instance, directed that the day for Christians to meet together should not be the seventh, but the first day of the week. We find, too, that the leading feature of their worship on that day was the celebration of the Lord's Supper, or Eucharist, for we read that "on the first day of the week the disciples came together to break bread." We find also that St. Paul assumes that such a day, when they met together for such a purpose, was the fittest day for gatherings for charitable purposes. "On the first day of the week," he writes, "let every one of you lay by in store as God hath prospered him."

That the early Christians carried this out, we learn from an account of Christian worship in a very early Christian writer, Justin Martyr. The passage is so interesting that I will give it in full: "And over all that we offer we bless

the Maker of all things, through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost. And on the day called Sunday all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the Apostles, and the writings of the Prophets are read, as long as time permits ; then when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings with all the power he can, and the people assent, saying ‘Amen,’ and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do and willing give what each thinks fit, and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows, or those who through sickness, or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and, in a word, takes care of all who are in need.”*

You see that collections for the poor, and, if for the poor, for all the needs of the Church, are mentioned as if they were an integral part of Divine service.

* Justin Martyr, ‘First Apology,’ chap. lxvii.

We now come to our own Church. The practice of presenting oblations of money and other gifts at Holy Communion was established, or at least recognised, by St. Augustine, the first missionary to our Saxon forefathers. It is particularly related how he consulted with Gregory, the Bishop of Rome, who had sent him, respecting the distribution of the alms received at the offertory.

During the Middle Ages, that is, in the period between the first planting of Christianity amongst our Saxon forefathers and the Reformation, the mode of giving by offertory fell into disuse, and it was renewed when our service was remodelled. There is nothing in the unreformed service answering to our offertory sentences, and no directions in that service "that the deacons or churchwardens, or other fit persons, shall receive the alms for the poor, and other devotions of the people, in a decent bason, to be provided by the parish, and reverently bring it to the Priest, who shall humbly present, and place it upon the Holy Table." It may be a satisfaction to some to know that this part of our service is at present exclusively Church of England. The Church of Rome, both in this country and elsewhere, having long discontinued this most sacred form of giving in Divine worship.

And now I will say a word or two respecting the offertory, as it exists amongst us, as a mode

of giving. The great difference between it and other modes of collecting alms is in the far greater solemnity and deeper devotional expression which attaches to it. When the alms are collected—as they usually have been in this and other churches—at the doors, the collection of them forms no part of the recognised service of God. Divine service is, in fact, concluded, the blessing is given, and the people deposit their alms at the door as they are putting on their hats; so that all idea of giving to God of our substance *seems* at least excluded. On the plan of the offertory all this is reversed. The giving of our substance is invested with as much religious solemnity as possible. Amidst all our miserable differences of opinion, there are none amongst us who look upon the Table of the Lord otherwise than as the material centre of our most solemn service, and on this table what we give is presented to God, for His acceptance and His blessing. I cannot but believe that it is this which has caused this mode of giving to be in so many cases accompanied with the Divine blessing in so marked a manner. For it is surely some mark of God's blessing when men's hearts are opened to give in a way which precludes all ostentation and vainglory.*

* With respect to the religious impression which this mode of giving is calculated to produce, I desire to draw attention to the following extract from a tract or pamphlet of which, I am sorry to say, I have lost the title, and so cannot refer to

We are continually confessing with our lips that we ourselves and all that we have belongs to God. By the use of the offertory, we make some attempt, feeble it may be, to reduce this confession to practice. For we cannot be supposed to give ourselves to God whilst we keep all that belongs to us to ourselves. What we have and what we hold necessarily ministers to our selfishness. And it is only by surrendering it for the good of others that we can prevent it from doing this.

By a rite which practically sets before us every time we come together for public worship the duty of giving to God, we are reminded in a way which is otherwise impossible how the truth that Christ gave Himself for our sins in

it. "The incumbent in a certain parish had restored the practice of presenting the alms on the Lord's table, instead of having them carried straight into the vestry, as had been the custom for many years. This was opposed by some, and in consequence the subject was much discussed in the parish; and, among other remarks which were made to the incumbent, the following, made by a man brought up a Dissenter, and who very rarely came to church, deserves recording. He said, "Well, at all events, this discussion among you has settled a question which has troubled me ever since I was able to think for myself, and that as to the lawfulness of having collections in places of worship at all. It was always abhorrent to my feelings. I never heard the chink of the money without thinking of the money-changers in the temple. But now you have put it to me in a totally new light. It seems transformed by being thus offered into a sacrifice made to God, and becomes a part, and a most fitting part, of the service of the church."

the way of self-sacrifice, is the reason why we should recognise self-denial and self-sacrifice in all our services.

I have many times set forth from this pulpit the extraordinary place which is assigned in Scripture to the duty of "doing good and communicating." It is no exaggeration to say that no Christian grace is so frequently urged upon us. Purity, honesty, uprightness, truth, and peace amongst ourselves are insisted on, and we cannot be saved if we are impure, or dishonest, or untruthful, or contentious, but if any one will take the trouble to examine the New Testament for himself, he will find that the duty of giving from right motives, and with a view to the glory of God, and the approval of Christ, is oftener insisted upon than even purity, honesty, uprightness, and truth. This is a fact which any one who has a New Testament can satisfy himself about. If, then, it be an important thing that we should have the ten commandments read in our hearing, that we may "ask God's mercy for our transgression thereof for the time past, and grace to keep the same for the time to come," is it not equally needful that by the reading of such passages as the offertory sentences we should be reminded of a duty which occupies a more prominent place in New Testament teaching than any single one of the ten commandments, which duty has far more promises attached to its right performance, and

a more fearful penalty to its neglect, than any other? If Christ will make good His own words, in which He encourages us to "lay up treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal;" if it be an actual fact that "he that soweth little shall reap little, and he that soweth plenteously shall reap plenteously;" if it be true that God is not unrighteous "to forget our works and labour that proceedeth of love;" and if He be in very deed "well pleased" when men "offer such sacrifices" as doing good and distributing, as His Apostle would lead us to believe that He is: If these things be so, and if some day or other we shall experience in our own persons the truth of all of them, then, I think, that it is not too much that we should have the sentences which set forth such promises read once a week, and an opportunity given to us of claiming the blessings which God thus offers.

And now one word to my poorer brethren. When we ask for the alms of the congregation we generally ask them on your behalf, for the education of your children, or for the hospitals in which you are tended when you are sick. Now, we ask your constant contributions along with those of your richer brethren for the carrying on of the work of the Church in this place.

I believe that a greater blessing may reasonably be expected to accompany the alms which

you give than those of your richer brethren, for what you give costs you far more than the offering of the richer man costs him. When you can make an offering, and I believe that by the exercise of some self-denial all can, I am sure you will not only be the better but feel the happier for doing so. You will then realise the more clearly that all the service of prayer and praise is yours. Remember that if you were a member of any Nonconformist body you would have to give something weekly, perhaps in many cases five or ten shillings a quarter, or even more.

And now one word respecting my own part in this matter.

The adoption of the offertory has been a matter of great thankfulness to me, because I have earnestly desired as a minister of Christ that all may have an opportunity of performing a Christian duty in the most Christian way possible, and I trust that all my teaching points to the fullest adoption of the system of the Church; but it is only right to state that the adoption of it at this particular time has been pressed upon me by others. This I am glad of. The only cases in which the offertory has failed have been those in which it has been forced by the minister on a congregation unprepared for it.

May God be pleased to bless what we have begun this day. May He open our hearts by

His grace, so that what we do may be profitable to our own souls and an example to others. Above all, may He give to us perseverance in well-doing, so that we may acquire (what some of us sorely need) a habit of giving; so that we may learn to give, not by fits and starts, or when we are excited by some stirring appeal, but constantly, from an ever-abiding sense of the love of God in having given Himself for us, and of the condescension of God in accepting so readily and rewarding so abundantly the offerings of such as we are.

XIV.

JUDGMENT BEGINNING AT THE HOUSE OF GOD.

1 PETER iv. 17.

“The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?”

It is a good and blessed thing, my friends, that the Church has given to us in her Christian year such a Sunday as Advent Sunday. Once every year, at least, the preacher, if he obeys the orders of his Church, must bring before his people some most unwelcome truths—some truths which the very religion of the day would lead us to forget rather than to remember. Now, the first of these truths is, that God is a Judge, a Judge at once righteous and unerring, and with all power at His disposal, and all eternity before Him, to carry out to the uttermost any sentence which His justice may see fit to pronounce.

Again, unlike the mere human judges who go their circuits amongst us, God does not look to the mere fact of such or such a thing having been done, but He looks also to motives. Why did you do or leave undone this and this? Did you do it because you were good and true in

heart, or because you had such ends in view? Did you do these things to please Me and benefit your fellow-creatures, or to please and benefit yourself?

God, then, looks not to the outward action, but to the state of heart, and it surely must be so, if He is to judge perfectly; for the judge of this world does his best to get at the motive of any action respecting which he has to deliver a judgment; I mean, of course, if it be, or have the appearance of being, a criminal action. In such a case, if he knows that he will have to punish, he will do his best to take all circumstances into account which may be suggested in mitigation of punishment; but the best administered justice of this world is imperfect. After we have watched a trial, and heard the sentence pronounced, we feel that, after all, the man who is to be punished is not so guilty as thousands who have done the same thing, and have escaped the vengeance of the law—not so guilty as thousands who have committed crimes equally wicked, which human law, in its imperfection, does not reach.

Now all this present imperfection of mere human justice will be rectified at the last day, and, as far as we can gather from Scripture, not till then. It will not, for instance, be rectified at the moment of death. There is nothing whatsoever to warrant the idea which is so abundantly fostered by the popular religionism of

the day—that the time of death will be the time of the great award. It is true that our own state of probation will be then at an end. He that is filthy must then be filthy still, and he that is holy will have no further conflict to maintain in order to subdue his flesh to the spirit. The righteous will be in a place of rest, but they will still be waiting, as their brethren on earth are waiting, for the appearance of the Judge and the Bridegroom. And the wicked will be in a state of gloom and despair, knowing that the harvest is past, the summer ended, and they are not gathered into God's garner; but at the moment of death there will not be that open, public, tremendous exhibition of God's justice to all men gathered together which both the Scriptures and the Church teach us that there will be when Christ comes again.

Again, when the judge of this world comes round and holds his courts amongst us, only those who have transgressed the law in those matters of which human laws take cognizance are summoned as culprits before him. Only certain criminals are brought up for trial: by no means all. A man may, all his life long, be corrupting others with his evil example and wicked conversation. He may be a seducer of innocence, and a slanderer of the religious character of those about him. He may set friend against friend and neighbour against neighbour. He

may be a bad son, a bad husband, a bad father, a faithless friend. He may overreach in a thousand ways unknown to, and unrecognised by, the law. He may undermine the faith of all about him in the most precious truths of religion, and yet it may be utterly out of the power of the earthly judge to call him to account for his misdeeds.

And again, when the earthly judge holds his court there is one prisoner at the bar and a multitude of spectators, some intent upon the trial of their fellow-creature, because they are interested in the issue of the trial; some because they desire to see the ends of justice brought about; but the greater part are there to pass away the time. But at the great assize all will be at the bar, and all will look on. All will be gathered together to see the perfection of justice administered, and you will at the same time, each one of you for yourself, receive your eternal award. You will be spectators of this tremendous scene—you will perhaps some of you even be assessors, for St. Paul asks, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world;" and he implies a still more wonderful thing when he goes on to ask, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" So that some will actually be summoned by the Judge Himself to judge under Him. But withal this, we shall all be judged. All—not some great criminals—not some irreligious persons—not

those whom religious persons call the world—but all.

Now this truth, that God will, in no mere figure or appearance, but in very terrible reality, judge all men, is one very much lost sight of, not only by the irreligious, but by the religious. There are two worlds, in one or other of which we all live. There is the religious, or, as it is sometimes called, the Christian, and there is the irreligious world. The religious world (and I am not for a moment using the term in an invidious sense) occupies itself—I will not say busies itself—about religion. Just as such terms as the “scientific world,” the “political world,” the “fashionable world,” are general terms to describe those whose principal thoughts are upon science, politics, high society—so the “religious world” is the term to describe those whose first and chief thoughts are upon religion—I do not mean, of course, any particular form, for the religious world and the Church are by no means conterminous, but about those relations between God and the soul which we all, by a sort of common consent, have agreed to call “religion.” The men of this religious world, having had their eyes opened to the permanent importance of such matters as the world to come, the saving of the soul, and the claims of God and of Christ upon the whole man, measure all other things by these. A scheme, a

movement, or an institution, is valuable in their eyes in so far as it promotes, or seems to promote, religion, i.e., either the fear or the love of God, or perhaps that form of faith or discipline which they think identified with the advancement of the fear and love of God. The irreligious world are those who, to use the broadest expression possible, "disregard the claims of religion," and who live as if they had no souls to save, no God to glorify, no eternal state of existence to prepare for.

Such are the two worlds. Now the irreligious world, of course, because it is irreligious, and refuses to recognise the things of God, puts forcibly out of mind all thoughts of judgment to come. "Let us eat and drink," say the men of this world, "for to-morrow we die." They do not perhaps say such a thing aloud—for the Christian religion is professed by the world—but their lives are not the less as if their one thought was that of the rich fool in the parable. "Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry."

It is no wonder, then, that such as these do their best to believe in no judgment to come; but what I now proceed to assert is a wonder indeed; and it is this, that the religious world, that is, the vast majority of those religious people who are loudest in their professions, do not realise that they shall be judged. "Judgment," says an Apostle who spake by direct

inspiration of the Holy Ghost, "Judgment must begin at the house of God." It does not begin with the impenitent and hardened, on the contrary, the house of God, the professors of faith and godliness, are taken first—they have their turn first. Now I say that the religious world, the vast body of them at least, scarcely believe this, if they can be said to believe it at all. They believe that the *world* will be judged, but not the people of God. The popular religion of the day teaches that a man is saved when he "believes," and so, as being saved, he will have nothing to do with judgment. He will stand, or perhaps sit, and see others judged; but he himself cannot be judged, because he is now saved. If he has to go through the form, it will be a mere form in his case. He has laid his sins on Jesus. He has been enabled to exercise faith in His atonement, and, *ipso facto*, his crown is assured to him; so that it would be actual want of faith in him to give heed to such words as "Let no man take thy crown."

Now I say that it is astounding that in a country in which there are so many Bibles there should be rife on all sides opinions so contrary to all the teaching of the Bible; but so it is. I have heard men and women, professing the deepest spirituality and the most unreserved deference to the least word of the Bible, who have told me that the judgment is not for the people of God.

Now such people have great weight in the religious circles of such a place as this, and they speak with confidence, and so carry away with them many weak and ill-taught brethren. And yet they say what they say "not knowing the Scriptures," rather, must we not say, "willingly ignorant" of the plain, direct teaching of the Scriptures. For the greatest Apostles speak of themselves as expecting to be judged. The Apostle St. Paul says, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body;" and the pronoun "we," in the original, is very emphatic. He says also, respecting himself, "He that judgeth me is the Lord." And a second Apostle, he that wrote the words of the text, plainly includes himself as one of those to be judged, when he writes, "Judgment must begin at the house of God, and if it first begins at *us*, what shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel?" Then a third Apostle warns his brethren that the "Judge standeth at the door;" and a fourth delivers this message from the Judge himself: "I am He that searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give to every one of you according to your works."

Now if God is to be a just Judge, and to deal justly with all, it is clear that His own children must be judged; for there is the greatest difference between both the outward circumstances and the inward life of one child of God and

another. Some of God's children—and by God's children here I mean, of course, not merely the baptised, but those who give some proofs of abiding in God's grace—some of these surrender themselves wholly and unreservedly to God. They do all things as in His sight. They do all the good they can for the bodies and souls of their fellow creatures. If rich, they “trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living and true God; they do good; they are rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.” If poor they are patient, temperate, resigned to their lot, evermore casting all care upon God. They do not merely do what comes in their way, they go out of their way, they give themselves trouble, in order to serve and please God. Some, on the other hand, who with the religious world would pass muster as God's children, have little to show but words. They are able to speak fluently. They are able to judge, as they suppose, what is according to the Gospel and what not, but in other respects you see little difference. It is true that they are precise about certain amusements, but they are not careful about speaking the truth. They look to the Cross and trust in Him Who died on it, and must be credited with warm feelings respecting His love in dying for them, but they have little or no concern about taking up their cross and following Him. Now it is quite clear that if God is, at the last, to assign the places in His eternal kingdom ac-

cording to each man's work, as His Son so emphatically declares that He will, then there must be a judgment, not of the world—the godless world—only, but of the true people of God themselves. It assuredly must be so; or else what truth is there in such a parable as that of the Pounds, where he who had made his one talent into ten is made ruler over ten cities; he who had made his one talent into five, is made ruler over five cities? The reward exactly apportioned, in each case, to the improvement.

It is true then, fearfully true, that judgment must begin at the house of God. The children of God, the professors of godliness, will be judged first. How needful, then, that religious people should remember that Christ not only says, "I am come that they might have life," but that He goes on to say "that they might have it more abundantly:" that, in the words of His servant, they should "add to their faith virtue; and to their virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." How needful that they should ever have on their lips some such prayer as that of last Sunday: "Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the *wills* of Thy faithful people, that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of Thee be plenteously rewarded."

Judgment then will begin at the house of God, and with the very house of God it will be severe; for the Apostle writes, in the next verse, "If the righteous scarcely be saved." The righteous *scarcely* saved! We have been accustomed to think that their salvation abounded, for it is a salvation by the Blood of the eternal Son applied to them, and by the Spirit of God working within them. If Two Persons in the Ever Blessed Trinity work together to save them, how is it that they can be said to be *scarcely* saved? Because the Apostle here looks to the strength of human corruption, and to the fact that God leaves within the righteous that most fearful of all gifts, a free will. We are not saved as a man would save an inanimate thing, as a garment, or a picture, or a jewel, out of the fire. Such things are saved by being simply picked up and put into a place of safety, and there is no further danger. But souls are not saved in such ways. The soul cannot be shut up in a place of safety as if it were a piece of plate or a precious work of art. It ranges free; and if it ranges free, it must come at times within the reach of danger. This is why the righteous scarcely are saved. It does not mean for a moment that forgiveness is not absolute, or the grace of God not all powerful, or that the Sacraments lose their virtue, or that prayer is not prevailing; but it means that when the righteous look back on the past, as, doubt-

less, St. Peter did, they will be amazed at the forbearance of God in having borne with them after such manifold neglects, forgetfulnesses, slownesses, falls.

Judgment, then, will begin at the house of God, but it will not end there. If it first begin at apostles, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel? If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? If there is a certain severity, a wise and fatherly severity, exercised by God towards His true children, what will be His severity towards His enemies?

Unspeakably dreadful are the declarations of God in Scripture respecting the misery of the finally impenitent. Christ Himself, the merciful Christ Who bought us with His Blood that we should not suffer the eternal effects of God's wrath, this merciful Christ, we are assured, will come again "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not His Gospel." Christ Himself, our most merciful Redeemer, when He speaks of the outer darkness of the final exclusion from God, says of it, "*There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth ;*" as if all the misery and despair which human beings have ever suffered hitherto will be as nothing, and the lost will then only know what misery and despair are.

May God preserve you, brethren, every one of you, from this horrible place. Pray for

me, I beseech you, as well as for yourselves, that God may save both yourselves and me from present sin, and grant us perseverance unto life eternal. And that this may be, let us pray Him that we may have grace to obey the Gospel. The fearful end of the wicked will come upon them, not merely for their sin, but because they have not embraced, and continued in, the one remedy for sin—the hope of the Gospel. No man, I say, will be lost simply because he has committed sin, but because he has set at naught the remedy for sin contained in the Gospel.

What, then, is it to obey the Gospel? It is to obey the very first command of Christ, “Repent!”—the first preaching of St. Peter, in the first Christian sermon ever preached, “Repent!”—the word that St. Paul first spake everywhere, “Repent!” It is to believe in the record that God has given to us of His Son. It is to believe, as a personal matter in which I am inexpressibly interested, that God’s very and eternal Son took man’s nature upon Him, and in that nature suffered and died for all men; for myself and for all. It is to realise that that Son of God is now at the right hand of God as our Intercessor, and to plead evermore His intercession. It is to receive His words as the words of Him Who has the words of eternal life. It is to accept all His words, especially those words in which He sets forth

the means by which we receive grace from Him to renew our nature and to do His will. And what is to obey the Gospel? It must include perseverance in all this, for He has said: "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

XV.

THE SALVATION OF THE SOUL.

JAMES i. 21.

“Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”

“ABLE to save your souls,” the Apostle says, and he writes to Christians; and to Christians whose profession of faith cost them far more than ours costs any of us. Do, then, our souls need to be saved, and how are they to be saved?

“*Able* to save your souls!” the Apostle speaks as if it were a matter of difficulty, perhaps of great difficulty, this “saving” of the soul. Let us spend a little time in thinking about this first of all truths—that we have souls. What does it mean? It simply means this, that we, each one amongst us, will live for ever and ever. We who live, and move, and eat, and sleep like the brutes; for we partake of the same mere animal existence as they have; we who are able to think and express our thoughts to one another, which if the brutes can do at all, they can only do in a very imperfect way; we who have what the brutes assuredly have not—a conscience which tells us that there is a right and a wrong, which

makes us surmise that there must be a judgment in which the wrongs of this evil world will be redressed ; we who are able to know that there is a God, and that this God is a true Father, and has a Son, and a Spirit ; we who are able, if we will, to pray to this God, and to converse with Him, and are actually here within these walls for this purpose ; we who have been baptized, and so have a Christian name to which we have answered times without number, and by which, it may be, on a day which may be very near, our Judge will Himself call us when He welcomes us to His joy, or condemns us to His prison.

We shall live for ever !

We who can love, and hate, and fear, and hope, and rejoice ; we who can sin and repent, and pray, and do good to our fellow-creatures, we shall live ; the “ I ” in each one amongst us will never die.

Now it is the opening of the eyes to this which in vast numbers of cases, perhaps in all, begins to make the difference between the religious and the irreligious, the penitent and the impenitent, the godly and the ungodly in this world, and in the world to come between the saved and the lost.

Now, of course, I do not say that this is all which we must have our eyes opened to see, but it is in almost all cases the first thing—the beginning of the new and better life.

And this is clear from the fact that as far as the eye of man can judge, the greater part of men and women with immortal souls are living pretty much as if their souls would die with their bodies, or as if they would live for ever in their bodies ; they are certainly not living as if they will, one day or other, be judged for the deeds done in the body. They are making no preparation for an eternal existence. It would be ridiculous to speak of them “laying up treasures in heaven.” If there be a righteous judge, and an unerring judgment, and a place of punishment, vast numbers are actually preparing, to all appearance, for it ; in the fearful words of the Apostle, they are “treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

But I do not now particularly allude to such as are to all appearance in this fearful state ; I allude rather to the careless, thoughtless, multitudes who seem to have no concern for their souls, and I say that no matter how you describe preparation for an eternal existence, they show no signs of making such preparation.

Does the Psalmist describe in the very first Psalm the blessedness of the man whose “delight is in the law of the Lord,” and who “exercises himself in the law of God day and night,” and so he is “like a tree planted by the river of waters, which brings forth fruit in due season ;” such a description of a preparation for eternity

in no way belongs to them. Because Christianity is the religion of the land, and the Bible is the book which contains the principles and first account of that religion, the utmost which can be said is that they do not reject it, or treat it with open disrespect; but as to ever studying it, or taking delight in it, or the truths which are gathered out of it, because it reveals God, and reminds us of the great things which God has done for us, nothing can be farther from their thoughts.

Again, take the words of our Lord in His First Sermon. In the Sermon on the Mount, with which we are perhaps more familiar than with any other part of God's word, there are abundant materials indeed for helping each one of us to ascertain whether he is making any preparation for an eternal existence. "Strait is the gate," the Saviour says, "and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life;" and he adds, "few there be that find it." Can the generality of professing Christians be said to have ever, in the course of their spiritual lives, entered into a strait gate, after which entrance they have walked in a narrow way leading to life, that is, spiritual and eternal life.

Again, look at the blessings pronounced on certain characters by the Great Judge Himself: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Blessed are they that mourn; blessed are the pure in heart, the

peacemakers, the merciful, they who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Here is the King of the Eternal World, the Being Who has the disposal of its rewards, pronouncing a blessing on the souls that are humble, meek, peaceable, merciful, and so anxious about being righteous, that they are said to hunger and thirst after it.

And now, brethren, how many of us are at all desirous to possess these marks of the character which Christ approves? And yet we cannot be in the way of preparing for that kingdom over which Christ will rule for ever unless we are anxious about obtaining these blessings at His hands. For our Lord, of course, here speaks not of time, but of eternity—of that eternity in which we all acknowledge that we, each one of us, shall live for ever, and to which we all acknowledge that we are hastening.

The difference, then, between the godly and the ungodly, the forgiven and the unforgiven, the religious and the irreligious, starts from this point—that the one is not, and the other is, conscious that he has a soul which must live a never-ending life hereafter, and how it is to live hereafter depends upon how he lives now. So that here is, so far as concerns ourselves, the first, the most elementary of all truths, our own individual immortal life, which men are blind to, or they would never be so unconcerned about such a thing.

And yet how much is there to remind us of it. Every account of the death of a friend or neighbour forces upon us the thought "He is gone!" and the question too, "Where has he gone?" He has gone; his body remains with us, and we bury it out of our sight, but he, the man whom we knew, whose mind and heart we learnt from his words or his looks, he has gone; and where?

When we ask "Where?" it is not to settle for ourselves whether he is lost or saved—that we must altogether leave to his merciful but just Judge; but to remind ourselves that as he has, so shall we enter the eternal unchangeable state—the state where the poor in spirit shall possess the kingdom; where they that mourn shall be comforted; where the merciful shall obtain mercy; where the pure in heart shall see God.

Ah! and the state of which our Lord says the words, and terrific words they are: "*There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,*" as if all present sorrow and anguish, and remorse of spirit, at the chances of life utterly thrown away shall be as nothing; not to be named beside the sorrow and anguish and remorse of those whose day of salvation is past and gone, and they are cast into outer darkness.

Well, then, when men by God's grace have their eyes opened to this first, this elementary truth of all, that they have souls which must live

for ever, then the way is opened for the entrance into the soul of all other things of God.

They then begin to realise God. They may have always in some sense believed that there is a God over all, now they enter into somewhat of the feelings of holy Job, when he exclaimed, "I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, therefore I abhor myself." They may have hitherto believed in God, but as a God Who has no decided will about good and evil, right and wrong, sin and holiness: that is, they have never really believed in the God of the Bible; now they see, as they have never seen before, that this God is a personal Being Who takes note of all in their hearts and lives: nothing escapes Him. Now they know that He has been all their lives long looking for obedient love from them. They remember now that times without number, in one way or in another, this God has been saying to them, "My son, give me thine heart." Now they enter into the meaning of the Psalmist's account of God: "God is a righteous judge, strong and patient, and God is provoked every day." He is a righteous Judge, that their conscience tells them; He is strong, for He is the Lord of Life and Death; He is patient, for He has for years borne with them, and, though provoked every day, their neglect of His service has not as yet provoked Him to cut them off in their sins.

Thus their eyes are opened to see God as they never saw Him before, and now they become deeply interested, as they never were before, with the state of their souls as in His sight. What terms is He on with them? How does He regard them? Is He reconciled? Is he reconcilable? In fact to ask the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

Now the answer to this momentous question is worded in the text somewhat differently from what it is in the answer given by another Apostle on a memorable occasion. St. Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thine house;" whereas here St. James writes, "Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."

Both these directions are from the same Spirit, and are substantially the same: "Receive with meekness the engrafted word." The question of course must be asked and answered, "What part of the word?" I take the word here to be the word of the Gospel; but what part, what truth are we to receive with meekness, so that it may, as it can, save our souls?

Now to this I answer "any part." It is not so much the particular part or truth as the disposition in which it is received. You observe the words of the Apostle are "receive with *meekness* the engrafted word." By meekness the Apostle means meek submission, the

submission due from a very ignorant, erring, foolish scholar to an all-wise, unerring Almighty Teacher.

Such a scholar, a scholar who felt his own exceeding deficiency and ignorance and helplessness in presence of such a Teacher would meekly receive all His words. He would not refuse any. He would not say, "This is sufficient for me. That is a hard saying." This would not be the meekness due from a creature to his Creator Who was undertaking to enlighten him. When Christ expressed His Divine approval of Mary in the words, "She hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her," it was because Mary meekly and humbly sat at His feet.

And so, my brethren, for any one of you to receive with meekness the engrafted word means simply that you put yourself under the teaching of God: you say to Him, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." You take your place as an obedient, attentive, humble, devout hearer, at the foot of your Divine Master.

Now I say that *any* words which you will receive with *meekness*, and allow the Holy Spirit to engraft into your heart, will lead to the salvation of your soul; and for this reason, that Divine truth is all connected together; no one part can be separated from another. If you follow the leading of any one Divine truth, it leads you as surely as you meekly receive it

and follow it out to every other truth. For every message from God to your soul, either in the Bible, or out of it, if you listen to it, and receive it, will lead you to Jesus, Who is Himself the Truth, and in Whom all truth is as in a treasury, and Who sanctifies His people by His truth. (John xvii. 17.) And the converse of this is true, which is this, that the soul of the irreligious man does not really lay hold of any one truth in the teaching of the religion which he professes. It is not that he is perplexed, and cannot make up his mind about deep things which good men have differed about, though he would fain make that excuse to himself and to his neighbours.

No, he really does not hold fast any one thing. He may hold some truths, perhaps all, controversially; but he holds not one religiously, faithfully, obediently—in fact, practically. He does not realise the simplest things about God, such as His all-seeing eye, His ears ever open to prayer, His dislike of sin, His love of goodness and righteousness and truth in His creatures.

But to leave him, and to go to the case of those who desire to receive God's message of salvation for themselves. No matter what that word, that message from God, that truth, that precept, that text is, which is laying hold of you, receive it with meekness, as God's word, and it will assuredly lead you to salvation.

Is it a word, a message, a truth about re-

pentance ; about turning from sin and turning to God, that is, about conversion ? Why, how did Christ's forerunner prepare the way for Him, but by preaching of repentance ? If you are sorry and deeply ashamed of sin as done against God ; if you enter into the force of any penitential psalm ; if your words are "Have mercy upon me, O God ; blot out my transgressions ; wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, hide thy face from my sins," then God, we trust, is granting you repentance unto salvation not to be repented of. A man who is anxious about repentance, and receiving any word or message of God leading him to it, cannot stop at it. It is the strait gate, but a man who submits to be led by God cannot stop in the gate. He will go through the gate to Him Whose grace has brought him to it, and made him, in spite of flesh and blood, go through it.

Again, is a man anxious and earnest about cleansing his heart from all sinful thoughts, and is he treasuring up what God's word says about the mortification of all evil lusts, he cannot rest here, at least if he submits to all the leadings of God's word, for he does not expel the evil things from his heart that that heart may be empty, but that his God and his Saviour may, through the Spirit, be in his heart, for Christ has promised no less : "If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My

Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."

Again, does a man set himself to work to study and to follow the example of Christ, or of any of His saints? The more he puts the Divine pattern before him, the more he will feel—if, that is, he be honest about the work—how miserably he comes short. "How am I," he will say to himself, "to attain to all this? This is what God has set before me that I should be conformed to it, and how can I?" Sincerely putting this question to himself will open his heart to all God's messages respecting His assisting grace, and the power of His Spirit to renew the heart; for the Spirit of God is given to a man to renew him after the image of Christ in goodness, righteousness and truth.

Again, does a man receive into his heart any truth of God respecting prayer, and so sets himself to pray for any blessing upon his own soul, or upon the souls of others, his children or friends, or does he make a friend of God under the pressure of some great distress; such an one will find that he cannot pray without learning much about divine things. The very dependence upon God, which he acknowledges and exercises by repeated acts of calling upon God, will teach him faith in God, for it is in itself the beginning, and more than the beginning, of faith. Then having to do with God—personally and consciously having to do with Him

in one thing, will naturally lead him to have to do with God in many things, if, that is, he perseveres in prayer; and so, having habitual converse with God, he will get to know more of his Maker, and so he will be led to know Him in all the ways in which He has revealed Himself.

Or again, suppose a man who realises that he has a soul to be saved comes to church and hears the invitation to the blessed Sacrament, or sees the Holy Table ready decked and set in order for its celebration? Such an one must say, "What is all this to me? The minister of God has given out that he intends to 'administer to all such as shall be religiously and devoutly disposed the most comfortable sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, to be by them received in remembrance of His meritorious cross and passion, whereby alone we obtain remission of our sins.'"

Now let us take an extreme case, and suppose a state of almost heathen ignorance in the man who hears and receives this as a word from God to himself. "What is the Body and Blood of One Who died long ago a shameful death to me?" such a one might ask, "and why should I solemnly and in the public congregation commemorate that Death?"

Apart from the breaking of the Body of Jesus upon the cross, and the shedding of His Blood upon that cross, you would have had, as far as

we can gather from Scripture, no forgiveness of sins, no reconciliation to the God Whose law you have outraged by sin, no promise of grace to enable you to forsake and conquer sin, no eternal life in the presence of God. We cannot speculate upon what God *might* have done, but all that we learn from the Scriptures that God has actually done to bring about our Reconciliation to Him is through the Sacrifice of the Death of the man Jesus Christ on the cross. The eating of His Body and the drinking of His Blood, to which you are invited, looks solely to this. The breaking of the bread has no meaning, except as betokening and commemorating the breaking of the holy Body of Jesus on the cross: the words, "this is my Blood of the New Covenant," have no meaning, except as setting forth before God, and applying to ourselves, that Blood through the shedding of which we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins. The whole, from beginning to end, has to do with, sets forth, commemorates, applies the Death of Christ, and the benefits which we receive thereby.

Now I do not say that if a man receive, even with much humility and sincerity, the word of God respecting the holy Eucharist, he will in these days necessarily follow on to realise the whole truth respecting it. By no means. Prejudice, the divisions of the Church, the prevalent teaching, which comes short of exhibiting

the sacrament as the embodiment of a deep and awful mystery, and fear of being led into embracing what he is perpetually told is the worst error of a corrupt form of Christianity, which doctrine, by the way, is a caricature of the true one, and, like all caricatures, consists in the exaggeration of genuine features—all these things may contribute their influence to hold a man back from the full truth; but no one can receive with meekness the word respecting the Supper of the Lord, without receiving much, very much, truth respecting salvation by Christ, that His Body being the flesh which the eternal Word assumed is of such surpassing worth that the breaking and giving of it is for the reconciling of the world, and of such surpassing power that it is the life of the world, that the death whereby we are redeemed must be made over to us one by one, that one by one we must stretch forth the hand of our faith to receive it, that Christ is the bread which came down from heaven, and that they who partake of Him thereby in some wondrous way dwell in Him, and He in them.

All these things a man will be, to say the least, in the direct way of receiving who receives meekly the engrafted word respecting the Supper of the Lord.

One word more: there are those who say, and there is much in the rest of Scripture which gives grounds for what they say, that

the "engrafted word" here means not what we call the word written or spoken, or the truth or truths of the Gospel, but that it means Christ Himself. Christ is The Word, and He is called here the "engrafted Word," because He offers Himself to be formed within us, and to be in each one of us the seed of all fruit well-pleasing to God.

I have, however, preferred to take the former meaning, for, after all, it is by hearing and receiving the word of God that we effectually receive Him, according to His own saying: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life."

Still the fact that it is not impossible that the Personal Eternal Word may be meant, should impress upon us more strongly the truth that the reception of Christ's words, or message, or Gospel, is intended not merely to make us religious or virtuous, but to bring about the thing which St. Paul calls the riches of the glory of the great mystery of godliness, "Christ in us the hope of glory."

XVI.

CHRISTIAN FREEDOM.

GALATIANS iv. 31.

“So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free.”

THE portions of the writings of the Apostles extracted out of their letters, one of which portions is read as part of our great act of Christian worship, (that is, when Holy Communion is celebrated) are, for the most part, exceedingly simple, and, as we say, practical: but there are exceptions to this, and there ought to be, for any one who has read those writings of the Apostles called the Epistles, knows full well that there are in them many things exceedingly “hard to be understood.” If, then, the extracts which we read in Holy Communion are to be a fair representation of what is in the Epistles themselves, they must, at times at least, set forth the deeper and harder teaching of those parts of the apostolic writings from which they are selected. If, for no other reason, at least to teach us, that we are not to expect that the things of God should always be as clearly understood by us as the things of every-day life: and also to teach us this

too, that, though the Scriptures have much in them which is level to the comprehension of all, yet there is much in them which is above the unlearned and ignorant, and which may be wrested by such to their destruction if they are unteachable and unsubmissive. Now, the Epistle for this Sunday—the fourth in Lent—is a place hard to be understood, and this not only by the unlearned, but by scholars and theologians. There is scarcely any one other passage of Scripture upon which more difficult questions can be raised, some of them insoluble, whilst at present we only “know in part.” I need scarcely say that one of them is the whole question respecting the allegorical or typical interpretation of the Old Testament. In the Epistle for this Sunday St. Paul seems to assert that the history of Abraham, as embodied in the Book of Genesis, is not only replete with instruction to be derived from taking it in its plain historical sense, but that it is also allegorical—Hagar, Abraham’s servant, the mother of Ishmael, being the type of the earthly Jerusalem, the Jerusalem which was the home and centre of the Jewish religion, and Sarah and her offspring being the type of the heavenly Jerusalem, that is, of the Church of Christ and the whole body of her children.

From the bare reading of the narrative in Genesis, we should hardly have suspected this; but, if we are to be guided by the Apostle, this

certainly must have been in the Divine Mind when God inspired this portion of Scripture which tells us of Abraham and Isaac, and of Sarah and Hagar.

Now, if such an historical portion of God's word be full of allegory, what other portions may not be equally full? So that the ancient Fathers may be right in seeing intimations of Christ and His salvation everywhere throughout the Old Testament, and some amongst us may be wrong in seeing typical allusions to Christ nowhere.

But I shall not now dwell upon the exposition of the particular portion of Scripture read as the Epistle, but rather take this place as containing the kernel as it were of the whole Epistle, of which it forms nearly the central portion; and I shall consider the Epistle itself, St. Paul's object in writing it, and in what respect its teaching bears upon views and opinions rife amongst us in this nineteenth century after Christ, and in what respects it does not so bear.

The Epistle to the Galatians was written under these circumstances. St. Paul had preached the Gospel to the heathen inhabiting the district of Asia Minor called Galatia, and turned many amongst them from idols to serve the Living and True God. These converts were admitted into the Church by baptism. St. Paul very expressly mentions this,

and lays great stress upon it where he says in this Epistle, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ;" and throughout the whole letter he addresses them in the most general terms possible. Throughout it he gives no hint that he considered some to be Christians and some not; some to have received the Spirit and some not; some to be members of Christ and some not. So far from this, he undoubtedly expresses himself as if the whole body of them had thus put on Christ, and that they were all in the same state, or had fallen from the same state, of grace.

Having, then, gathered into the Church all who had put away their idols and submitted to Holy Baptism, we are bound to take it for granted that he would use every available means for securing their spiritual welfare. Unless he had done so, he could not write to them in terms of such severe blame because they fell away. He would consequently do for them not less than he had done for other churches. He would institute the weekly (at least) celebration of the Lord's Supper among them, as we know that it was instituted everywhere else. He would choose out the most fitting persons to be their elders or pastors, and he himself would keep the oversight or rule over them in his own hands, and, when he was at a distance, administer it by the hands of his lieutenants or delegates, viz., those persons

such as Timothy, Titus, Erastus, Trophimus, and others, who were attached to him as staff officers are attached to a commander-in-chief: so that, through the eyes of these persons, he would continually overlook them, and would keep them, as long as he lived, under his own apostolical care. In all this, I only assume what I am bound to assume—that the Apostle would do for them all that he did for the welfare of other churches—so that if they did not grow in grace and perfect their faith and love, it was not his fault.

Well, whilst he was absent from them, working the work of Christ elsewhere, strange and unwelcome reports, which he found on inquiry to be too true, were brought to him respecting their spiritual state. He hears that false teachers, who were everywhere giving him trouble, were getting pernicious influence over them, and were preaching another Gospel, and, by so doing, were undermining the true faith of Christ.

Now, what was the new, and therefore false, Gospel? It took this form: that the faith of Christ, that is, the setting forth of His Godhead, Incarnation, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, and the necessary adjuncts to, and deductions from it all, such as the truths respecting His mystical Body, His perpetual Intercession, and such like, which St. Paul and his brother Apostles preached, were not suffi-

cient, but that they must be supplemented by Jewish rites. As for instance, that baptism was not sufficient, but that the person baptized must also be circumcised; that it was not sufficient to observe the day of the Resurrection, that is, the Lord's Day—that first day of the week on which the disciples assembled together for the "breaking of bread," but that the characteristic Jewish times and seasons, the days and weeks, and months and years, and, above all, the Jewish sabbath, must also be observed.

Now, it might be asked, was there any great harm in this teaching? Why was it in the eyes of the Apostle so noxious that he should regard its adoption as no less than a fall from Christ—no Gospel at all—in fact worse, as making void the first, that is, the true Gospel which St. Paul had preached, and by which the Galatians were saved? You observe that St. Paul does not accuse the false teachers of any heresy, such as denying any truth respecting our Lord's Person, or the doctrine of the Resurrection. How was it then that St. Paul could denounce so strongly the adoption of a few Jewish rites—rites, too, commanded by God in the Book of the Old Covenant.

Of course it might be answered, and with truth, that God had, by the mouth of His Apostles, abrogated or superseded these Jewish rites, and that if the Galatian Christians took to observe them, it was disobedience to God

on their part; but it is to be remarked that St. Paul takes very different ground from this in reproving them. He does not reprove them for their want of obedience, in that they adopted Jewish rites, but for their want of faith.

How could this be? Supposing that they believed in Christ as the Eternal Son of God, and that they had redemption through His Blood, what difference could it make to such a faith as this that they adopted one or two extra rites, or practised one or two extra ceremonies? All the difference in the world; for these Jewish rites had a meaning—a meaning attached to them by God Himself when He ordained them—and their meaning was this: that those who used them solemnly took their stand before God for salvation on what was ordained by Moses in the law. Thus St. Paul says respecting circumcision: “I testify to every one that is circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law—all its sacrifices, washings, abstinence from meats, and everything else which had been ordained by God to keep the Jew separate from the heathen.”

But must it necessarily mean this? Could not a Gentile Christian be circumcised, and adopt these ceremonial practices, and abstain from certain kinds of flesh in order to please his Jewish neighbours? No, not for a moment. These things, though abrogated, or on the point of being abrogated, being the ordinances of

God could not be played with. They had as long as they were in force a Divine significance; they brought men under obligations, for they were covenants, signs, or symbols, and so witnessed to all that partook of them that they were under the yoke of a particular covenant. Now, the Galatian Christians had voluntarily taken upon themselves the covenant of Christ—the new and better covenant of the Spirit—and the sign of their taking this upon them was their baptism, and the sign of their continuance in it was their continued reception of the Lord's Supper. When, then, they submitted to circumcision, and began to keep the Jewish feasts and to eat the Passover, they, in point of fact, confessed themselves dissatisfied with their standing in Christ. It was not, they thought, sufficient. Now, to see the sinful folly of this, let us see what is implied in our "standing in Christ." Christ is not a mere human lawgiver, sent to supplement the deficiency of the laws of Moses. He is the Eternal Son of God, Who came amongst us clothed with our nature. In that nature He suffered to reconcile the world to God, and rose from the dead to confirm the truth of the reconciliation, and to give effect to it. He took our nature up with Him into Heaven, and then sent down the Holy Ghost to unite us, body, soul, and spirit, to Himself, so that we should not only be holy in soul and spirit, but that it should be said of our very

bodies that they are His members. Nay, beyond all this, we have, according to His own words, the power, in some mysterious yet true way, to eat His Flesh and to drink His Blood, so that we may "dwell in Him and He in us," and may be raised up by Him at the last day. This is what the Christian possesses, or is privileged to possess, by his standing in Christ, by having been once made, and by his continuing to be, a member of Christ. I am not, you observe, for a moment assuming that we are all this, or have attained to it all; but I assuredly must assume, in thus describing the Christian standing, that we have a title to it all, that God designs us to enjoy it all by having caused us to hear the word of the Gospel, and by having caused us to be grafted into the body of His Son's Church.

Now, it is plain that if this be the Christian's lot in Christ, nothing can possibly be added to it. If our standing in Christ, for instance, gives us the privilege of being washed in His Blood Who is the Only Begotten of God, it is plain that to apply the blood of a lamb or bullock to us by any Jewish sacrificial rite, would be blasphemous folly. We may require the continued application of His Blood, but of no other. And yet the Galatian Christians, by their submission to Jewish rites, seemed to assert that the Blood of the Eternal Son was not a sufficient cleansing.

Again, if we are really and truly in Him

Who is the Eternal Son of God, we cannot be nearer to God, for none can be nearer to God than He Who could say, "I am in the Father and the Father in Me," and Who says to His brethren, "Ye in Me and I in you." But the Galatian Gentile, who had become a Christian, when he submitted to circumcision, expressed his belief that the Jewish system, into which circumcision was the door, would bring him still nearer to God than he was by being only in Christ. By such a thing, of course, he exhibited his want of faith; for any one who believes that Christ is not all-sufficient cannot in heart realise Him to be the Only Begotten of God.

Again—and this shall be my last illustration—in and by Christ the Holy Spirit was given. Christ said, "Behold I send the promise of My Father upon you." But with reference to this very promise He had also said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come unto you." The Holy Spirit was sent to make Christ present to His Church. He Who went away in the flesh returned in and by the Spirit. By this Spirit He worked the work of His Church. By this Spirit He enabled men to believe on His name. By this Spirit He baptized them into the One Mystical Body. By the same Spirit He so fed them with His Flesh and Blood in Holy Communion, that He dwelt in them and they in Him. By the same Spirit He subdued their corruptions, cleansed their

consciences, shed abroad His love and peace in their hearts, united them in the fellowship of His saints one with another, and engaged to raise up their bodies at the last day.

Now, the Spirit was not given thus under the dispensation of the law. St. Paul asked confidently, with an assurance that but one answer could be given to his question, "Received ye the Spirit through the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" All through the former times men were but "in the flesh." The ancient rites cleansed but the flesh, "sanctified to the purifying of the flesh," whereas the Spirit re-created, regenerated the soul or spirit. When, then, the foolish Galatians fell back upon their God-ordained but abrogated rites as something necessary to supplement Christianity, they reversed the whole order of things. They had begun in the Spirit, for by this they had been made members of Christ, and by the power of the same Spirit they had received His life-giving Flesh and Blood ; and it is not in the power of man to conceive of greater things than these. Thus they had begun in the Spirit, and yet, by submitting to the rites of Judaism, which were merely outward, they had submitted to things which had no promise of the Spirit, and so they called forth the indignant question of the Apostle, "Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?"

Such, then, is the meaning of this apostolical letter, and now, how are we to apply all this to our own day? and, which is equally important, how are we to meet and obviate the extensive misapplication of it?

The error of the Galatians appeared in this, that they adopted certain exclusively Jewish rites, such as circumcision; but the real evil of it all was far deeper. Their real sin was unbelief. By the adoption of Jewish rites they showed that they did not believe in the all-sufficiency of the Son of God; but, as I said, the apparent sign of the error was, that they submitted to the forms of an abrogated covenant. Now, as the Apostle, in this Epistle, takes occasion to speak in very strong terms against the use of these forms, unlearned and ignorant people misapply his words as if he speaks against attaching too much importance to the Sacraments of the Christian Church. I doubt not but that every one before me is familiar with this misapplication; perhaps some of you have in time past so misapplied the teaching of the Apostle yourselves. Now, if the Sacraments of the Christian Church are only outward rites, as the Jewish were then, there would not only be a danger of making too much of them, but we must go farther, and say that if they are only such, they are altogether out of place in the Christian system; for the grand difference between the Jewish and

the Christian systems, according to St. Paul, is this, that the Spirit was not given under the one, but is given under the other. The Jewish ceremonies, then, were mere ceremonies; they were outward forms. I do not, of course, mean to imply that they had no meaning. They had all a secret reference to good things to come, but they had no grace—no inward and spiritual grace: whereas the very definition of a Sacrament is, that it is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given to us as a “means whereby we receive” this spiritual gift, and “a pledge to assure us” of its reception.

If then the Christian Sacraments are outward forms, the whole drift of the teaching of this Epistle is, that they should be abandoned altogether; for in such a case the Christian Sacraments are Jewish rites only, under other forms and with other names. But such cannot be. If the Jewish religion be a religion of types, the Christian religion, which is its fulfilment, is a religion of antitypes, rather of the Antitype, and of the means, external and internal, by which we are grafted into Him and abide in Him: and so St. Peter actually calls Holy Baptism an “antitype,” and tells us that, when faithfully received, it saves by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. And St. Paul speaks of “Christ our Passover” being sacrificed for us, and therefore we are to “keep the feast,” which can only be the reception of the cup and the bread, which

he assures us are the participation of the Body and Blood of Christ. St. Paul always speaks of the Christian Sacraments in very strong terms. He scarcely mentions them except as having great grace from Christ connected with them.

Now, why should he who wrote the Epistle to the Galatians do this? Because he regarded them, not as forms, but as spiritual realities. He made much of them, because he believed in Him Who had instituted them. He did not believe that Jesus Christ, when He instituted so spiritual a system as the Christian, could ordain bare forms. It seems reasonable that the promise of the Spirit should be attached to all that belongs to a dispensation of the Spirit. And St. Paul's belief in Christ would lead him to believe in all the words of Christ—in His very least words—and so much more in such words as those in which He has taught us sacramental mysteries.

We are now, some of us at least, approaching the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. What do we think of it? Do we regard it as a duty to be gone through, or as a badge of Christian profession? If so, then we take the same view of it as a Jew took of his Passover. We repeat over again, as far as lays in our power, the Galatian error, and the sooner we learn more of it, and so increase our faith in Him Who ordained it for far higher purposes,

the better. I desire to come to Holy Communion, not because I regard it as a form, but because I do not. I look upon it as infinitely more —as embodying, in fact, the deepest mysteries of grace, and making me, if I have faith, a partaker of them.

And now to advert to another point in which the whole teaching of this Epistle is misapplied by many, and must we not say to their destruction? This is especially the Epistle of Christian liberty. In the passage read for the Epistle of this day the Jewish Church is said to be of the “bondwoman,” and to be “in bondage with her children.” The Jerusalem from above is free. My text itself consists of the words, “We are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.” Again, the Apostle bids them to “stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.” Now, what is this liberty? Time would now fail me to enter into what it is. I am more concerned at this moment with what it is not. This liberty is in no sense laxity as opposed to strictness. Let us remember that no Epistle contains such a view of the Christian state, as one of strict and severe abnegation of every evil defiling thing, as this, for in it we read that terrible list of the works of the flesh of which we are assured that “they who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God;” and we have, following close upon it, that counter list of the works of the Spirit which

teaches us so plainly that our religion is to consist in no mere negation of evil, but in the cultivation of every Christian virtue and grace, and the whole concludes with the words, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." What a liberty is this!—a liberty which consists in our having evil lusts crucified! Yes! it is a strange liberty for a worldly and sensual and godless man! It is a liberty to flee from and resist and conquer sin. It is liberty to break and to cast away the chains of covetousness, so that we should give liberally and cheerfully. It is liberty to serve God. It is a liberty to be disengaged from the world and to cleave to Christ. It is a strange and unwelcome liberty to the willing slave of sin, but it is a blessed freedom to the children of God. It is a strange liberty to the sinful worldling, for it is a liberty which forbids him to do what he likes; but it is a blessed liberty to the Christian, for it is a state of liberty in which he is set free to do what he knows to be the best for a rational creature who is conscious that he is the child of the Best and Holiest of Beings; a liberty from the chains of evil things which imprison and narrow and degrade his heart, and a freedom which will exalt and expand and ennoble it for ever and ever.

XVII.

THE JOY OF FORGIVENESS.

PSALM li. 8.

“Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.”

THERE are some who say that the joy of the penitent, at the assurance of the forgiveness of his sins, is the one thing needful. They would make it to be the one test of sonship; the one evidence, without which all else is valueless, of our being in the favour of God. And as one error is sure to beget its opposite, one extreme sure to bring about its contrary, it has been the characteristic of another school, a school to which, notwithstanding the extravagancies into which many of its followers have fallen, we owe the revival of the most precious Christian truth respecting God's Church and Sacraments—it has been the characteristic, I say, of this school to assert that the man who has fallen after baptism can never expect to rejoice. Their teaching would rather discourage the penitent from looking for or seeking Christian joy, as if it were presumption or fanaticism in such an one to do so.

Now both the Bible and the Church teach

us that joy in God is for all Christians. "We joy in God," the Apostle says, "through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." But is it not an Apostle full of the Holy Ghost—not a whit behind the chiefest Apostles, who says this? And is it not presumption in poor sinful creatures such as we are to expect to enjoy what He enjoys? No, my brethren. For what is the ground of the Apostle's rejoicing? Not the things in which he, an Apostle, not a whit behind the chiefest, excelled the greatest saints, such as his labours, sufferings, self-denials, and successes, but that in which he is one with the vilest sinner whom God has ever pardoned, and that is in the reception of the Atonement. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

But one infinitely greater than St. Paul, Christ our Judge, has ordered that, if we have sinned ever so deeply, and yet repent, we may look for joy. Surely, if there be one place of Scripture which is designed to teach us the dealings of our heavenly Father with those who have left His home and wasted His grace, it is the parable of the Prodigal Son, and there we have the returning backslider received back, not with cold words and averted looks, and reproachful allusions to the past, but with joy and gladness. Whilst he is a great way off

the father discerns him, runs to meet him, falls on his neck, and kisses him; gives him no time to finish his confession, but cuts short his words of self-upbraiding, and calls to his servant to bring forth the best robe, the ring, the shoes, and to make ready the entertainment; and so full is he of joy himself, that he cannot bear the thought of there being one in the house who does not share it, and so he demeans himself to go out a second time, that he may, if possible, force the ungracious grudging brother not to mar the rejoicing by his absence.

Now, are we to suppose that it would have been becoming for the one on whose account all this joy is displayed to have himself refused to take any part in it? Would it have been well for him, out of a voluntary humility, to persist in refusing to put on the festal robe, and to wear the ring, and to take his place at the entertainment? Would not such a way of expressing his deep contrition have been far more than unsuitable; would it not have been ungracious, unloving, because no fitting response to the free forgiving love of his father? Would it not be the heart's desire of the father that the son should rejoice with all around him? Such joy would not be presumption. It would have been wicked presumption in him, whilst he was living in sin, to count upon any such a welcome; but he has forsaken his

sin, and the welcome has been given, and now it would be the greater presumption for him to nurse his grief, to retire into his wretched self, and to affect to doubt the tokens of love and forgiveness which his father is heaping upon him.

Such is beyond all doubt the teaching of this parable, if our Lord intended it for the times of the Gospel, if the Church is right in claiming its consolations for her own erring and straying ones, as she does when she bids her ministers at times begin the daily offering of prayer and praise with the words of this prodigal: "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

Now the Fifty-first Psalm is the God inspired effusion of the true penitent's heart, as he is returning to his heavenly Father. In it—in its sincere and devout use, the penitent recognises all the various acts of Divine compassion in his restoration: that God will have mercy upon him after no stinted measure, but "according to the multitude of His tender mercies;" that God, if He washes the sinner will wash him not partially, but thoroughly; that God desires not only not the death of the sinner, but his complete cleansing, so that he in whose heart sin once reigned without a rival should have righteousness and heavenly wisdom in the

central place of his soul ; that God will purge the sinner with the Blood which He has Himself ordained as a propitiation, and wash him so that he shall be whiter than snow ; that God will exercise His power as the Creator, and not merely alter and amend the sinner's heart, but create within him a new one ; and that God will uphold the sinner by His free Spirit, and will make him instrumental in making His grace known among the man's fellow-sinners ; that He will deliver him from sins of the deepest die, even though the sinner's sin be the sin of Cain ; that He will open the sinner's lips, so that he whose lips in time past only gave utterance to what is worldly and sensual, should henceforth give utterance to what is heavenly and spiritual.

Such are some of the various acts of Divine compassion to the sinner which the returning prodigal, taught by God Himself, recognises, and of which He claims the exercise. And amongst these the sinner, taught by the Spirit, recognises the welcome with which our heavenly Father welcomes back those who are weary of their sins, and ashamed of themselves. "Make me," he prays, "to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice ;" and again he claims the gift of this joy, when further on he prays, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit." So that not more certainly does the

penitent (if the Fifty-first Psalm be his prayer) pray for cleansing and renewal of heart, and to be upheld by the Spirit of God, than the very same penitent, in the same words, provided for him by the same Spirit, prays for the "hearing of joy and gladness," and for "restoration to the joy of salvation."

Now in all this the penitent asks for nothing unfitting or unnatural; but for what is perfectly natural—if, that is, God be a Father who makes Himself known to His children, and encourages them to have intercourse with Him. If God rejoices over those who repent, as His Son assures us that He does, it seems natural that He should wish that the penitent should recognise this, and this he cannot do unless he also rejoices in such restoration; for when God bids us to rejoice with them that do rejoice on earth, much more does He bid us rejoice with Him Who rejoices in heaven. When the penitent is restored to the favour of God, he is restored to the greatest favour which a reasonable creature can enjoy. If in God's favour is life, he is restored to life, and if he is conscious of this how can he help being glad? He would do violence to his best nature if he were not.

And now we have to consider shortly how this joy of the penitent is recognised by the Church. We shall find that it is very fully recognised by her, both in her daily offices, and in her highest act of praise and thanksgiving.

In the service of the Church there is a compendium, as it were, daily repeated, of the Christian life. For it commences with a call to repentance and confession of sin. It proceeds to an act of actual confession, expressed in terms of the deepest contrition: "We have erred and strayed;" "Have mercy upon us miserable sinners," "spare," "restore." Then there is the authoritative declaration of pardon. Then there is the restored spirit of adoption crying, "Abba Father;" "Our Father which art in heaven." Then there is the supplication for power to praise, "O Lord open Thou our lips, and our mouth shall show forth thy praise." And then comes the joyful outburst of praise itself, "O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation:" "We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord;" and the rest of that wondrous hymn, "To thee all angels cry aloud; holy, holy, holy. Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father." And again, after some portion of the record of God's love in the life of the Redeemer has been read, we sing in words of holy joy, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people."

Daily even-song repeats the same sequence of penitent confession and joy in Christ: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath

rejoiced in God my Saviour." "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

And again in the Church's grand Act of praise and thanksgiving. After the deepest possible outpouring of humiliation and penitence, and the declaration of God's forgiving love, there is the call, "Lift up your hearts;" and we do so lift them up when we respond. "We lift them up unto the Lord," and we lift them up to join in the anthem of the seraphim: "With Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious Name; ever more praising thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy."

How, then, can any one calling himself a son of the Church take upon himself to frown upon the joyful sense of forgiveness which the Father vouchsafes to him who "was dead and is alive again; was lost, and is found." We must sing with the Spirit, and with the understanding; and, if so, we must pray that we may feel, and not rest till we do feel, what we sing in daily prayer and weekly sacrament.

And now, one or two observations suggest themselves on a review of the foregoing plain declarations of God's word.

The first of these is the mistake of making the joy of the penitent a part of a system, or a part of the plan of salvation, as men call it.

What I mean is this: You find many who sinned as the Prodigal in the parable did, or say that they have—You find them, when they are brought back and made alive to the things of Christ, boasting of the joy and peace which has, as they suppose, been vouchsafed to them, and judging and condemning others as having no assurance that they are in the favour of God unless they have experienced it. They actually throw in the teeth of their Christian neighbours their own confidence, and infer from the fact of their having experienced it, the danger of those who have not felt, or do not feel it. Their one question as a test of all Christianity is, “Have you peace with God?” Can you rejoice in God? Now, such persons, with all their seeming spiritual confidence, present to the well-instructed Christian the greatest possible anomaly. They seem to rejoice in God and Christ, and to triumph in the sense of the forgiveness of their sins, and yet they want, or have lost the savour of, that character on which the Saviour pronounces His very first blessing, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.” Let us give an illustration, and, I believe, no exaggerated one, of the danger, to say the least, of their case. The elder brother, in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, who continued under his father’s roof, is not painted in very attractive colours; and yet the father himself regards him as very far from

being lost because of his outbreak of envy and impatience, when he (the father) says to him, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." Words can hardly more strongly describe continuance in the favour of his father, and this at the very moment of his wretched exhibition of ill-temper.

But what should we say of the younger son if he were to throw in the teeth of his elder brother the signs and tokens of his welcome, and of the restored love of the father, and to infer that his elder brother, who had them not, was altogether out of grace. Should we not regard such demeanour on the part of the younger in the light of a grievous fall, or, at least, a sign that his repentance had been miserably shallow? Yes, it is one thing for God to forgive the penitent, and lift up the light of His countenance upon him, and give him peace; and quite another thing for the penitent to forgive himself.

All boasting of forgiveness, all display of the joy of forgiveness, as what we have and others have not, seems to spoil all. It is as if the Publican changed characters with the Pharisee, and said, "God, I thank thee that thou hast accepted me rather than my moral legal neighbour."

All classifying, all systematising of the inner feelings, or (as they are called) experiences of the Christian life, leads to the deepest and most

intense formality, because a formality of spirit. The joy of the penitent, through the work of the Holy Spirit within him, must be natural, spontaneous. To demand it as an evidence of acceptance takes off all its bloom—withers up all its freshness.

Then, in the next place, the joy of the penitent must be a joy mixed with fear and deep reverence: "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto him with reverence." The Cherubim, the beings nighest to the Eternal Throne, exhibit in outward act the lowliest reverence while they chant the highest act of praise. They cover their faces with their wings, and their feet with their wings, in token of lowly reverence, whilst they sing, "Holy, holy, holy." Again, it is not to Christ's enemies, but to His friends, His own chosen ones, that the Saviour says with such profound seriousness, "I say unto you, my friends fear Him who after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell, yea, I say unto you, fear Him." The true reverential fear with which all religious joy should be mixed is inseparable from true Christian faith; for if faith be the eye with which we behold the unseen, that eye must show to us the infinite greatness and majesty of God, as well as His love in entering into covenant with us. So that if faith realizes to us God as He is, that faith must produce fear mixed with love—love mixed with reverential fear.

“Make me, then,” the penitent prays, “make me to hear of joy and gladness. Make me to hear; open mine ears that I may hear with the ear of the soul the things which reassure me of Thy favour. Enable me to receive in faith as my own the promises of free forgiveness which abound in Thy word. Open the eyes of my soul, that I may discern on what a foundation, deep and broad, these promises of forgiveness rest; even upon the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of Thine only begotten Son.”

Yes, brethren, if we have in very deed, and without formality, or hypocrisy, or self-justification, confessed our sins, we are entitled to that exercise of God’s faithfulness and justice which we so often confess that we believe in, when we say in our creed, “I believe in the forgiveness of sins.” “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.”

Does, then, the pardon of the sinner on his repentance, and the knowledge that he is forgiven, go together? It seems reasonable that they should, and yet we dare not say that they do. No one who has had the direction of souls but knows well that there is often the sincerest and deepest repentance, and yet the cloud over the soul is not removed. How can we account for this, when we know that there is contrition, renewal, holiness? How is it that there is not peace? One way of accounting for

it, and, perhaps, the safest, is this, that there is in the penitent too much introspection, and too little realisation of those dogmatic truths of the Gospel which seem, in the case of the true penitent, to make forgiveness more easy to apprehend than its opposite condemnation. So seems to think such a man as Jeremy Taylor, when, in his book on 'Holy Dying,' he writes thus: "I consider that the ground of my trouble is my sin, and if it were not for that I should not need to be troubled; but the help that all the world looks for is such as supposes a man to be a sinner. Indeed, if from myself I were to desire my title to heaven, then my sins were a just argument for despair; but now that they bring me to Christ, that they drive me to an appeal to God's mercies, and to take sanctuary in the cross, they ought not—they cannot infer a just cause of despair. I am sure its a stranger thing that God should take upon Him hands and feet, and that those hands and feet should be nailed upon a cross, than that a man should be partaker of the felicities of pardon and eternal life; and it were stranger yet that God should do so much for man, and that a man that desires salvation, that labours for it, that is in life and possibilities of working his salvation, should inevitably miss that end for which God suffered so much."

Surely, my brethren, if we are to have reassurance, peace, and joy, these things are to

be attained by looking upward rather than by looking inward; even by looking to Him Who is in our nature at the right hand of God,—our Lord and our God, our Friend and our Brother, our Bridegroom and our Head, our Eternal Priest and Intercessor with the Father.

I have quoted a great divine of the Church, but a greater far than he, that Apostle whom the Church has ever called “the Divine,” has written these words: “These things write we unto you that your joy may be full.” Now, what words had this Divine Apostle actually written to fill up to the brim the cup of Christian joy? Was it a personal apprehension of our individual election or the sense of assurance? No, it was the very first truth of the New Testament; the first truth, because inscribed on its very first page,—the truth of the Incarnation of the Son of God: “That which was from the beginning, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life (for the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us,) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us. . . . And these things,” i.e., the coming amongst us of the Eternal Word under a form in which He

could be seen, and heard and handled, "these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." Here you see the realisation of Christian fellowship and of Christian joy is connected with the right apprehension of the truth of the Incarnation.

And lastly, consider the teaching and whole meaning and design of the Church's great characteristic act of worship—the celebration and reception of Holy Communion. That which we come to receive here would seem to assure us of forgiveness and its consequent joy, for in receiving It we must look out of ourselves to What is given to us. The Presence of Christ, no doubt, is ultimately to be sought in the worthy receiver, but to be in him It must assuredly first exist out of him, and apart from him, and It must be conveyed to him; and the means of Its conveyance are outward, discernible by the senses, and requiring by their very nature the communicant to look out of himself. Now he looks to receive That which must be, in very deed, the pledge of forgiveness, if it be in any real sense the "Cup of the New Covenant in Christ's Blood, shed for many for the remission of sins." If a man faithfully and penitently receives This he must receive the grant of forgiveness, and the veil or element under which he receives It is equally a pledge of the joy of forgiveness; for it is "wine that maketh glad the heart of man." Whether he look, then, to the Divine Gift, or

Inward Part, or to the outward visible sign which is the pledge to assure him of Its reception, it should alike make him to "hear of joy and gladness," and "restore to him the joy of salvation."

XVIII.

THE CENSUS.

NUMBERS i. 1, 2.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names.”

THE government of this country is now about to do that which, in these words, God commanded the Children of Israel to do above three thousand years ago.

On a certain day all those printed forms which have been left at each house in the kingdom will be collected, and when the numbers are added up we shall know over how many souls the sovereign of this kingdom reigns.

In a very short time, the names of every man, woman, and child in the kingdom will be transmitted to the government in London, to those officers who are appointed to add up the numbers, and to classify and tabulate certain facts respecting the population of the kingdom which, in the interests of government and science, should be known and published.

A Christian preacher will be able to gather from all this many illustrations bearing upon eternal things which should not be passed over; especially when we consider that many years will elapse before he will have a like opportunity of enforcing them.

During this next week, then, the name, and age, and occupation, and birth-place of every person in the three kingdoms will be registered; so that in a few months or so we shall know how many millions of human beings there are in the United Kingdom. We shall know exactly how many persons there are in the three kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland; how many there are in each county, and how many in each parish. Besides this, we shall know how many males there are, and how many females. We shall know how many children there are of a month old—of a year—of two years. We shall, in fact, know how many people there are of every age, from one to one hundred years and upwards. We shall know how many people there are engaged in every conceivable occupation or calling; how many clergymen, for instance, how many physicians, how many smiths and carpenters, how many labour in workshops, how many in the fields. These and a great many other such particulars we shall know. We shall know, in fact, every circumstance respecting these millions of our fellow-creatures and fellow sub-

jects, which can be tabulated, or which can be expressed in arithmetical figures; and there, I need hardly say, our knowledge will end. Very valuable, as far as it goes, will this mass of knowledge be to the advisers of the sovereign; some valuable legislation may be founded upon it; but at the best it will be a very imperfect knowledge. It will give us millions of names, ages, and occupations, and that will be all.

Let us dwell a little on this.

When the officer in London to whom belongs the task of adding up and classifying the returns of the population of this part of the country has before him the returns from this town and parish, what will he see? He will see merely names. His eye will pass from one name to another. He will take their number, and the number of each family, and their ages and occupations, and then his work is done. As he glances from one column to another, and from one line to another, each name will be to him simply a mark on the paper; not a name on the list will call to his mind's eye a single feature, or form, or character. But it would be far otherwise if the person who might happen to have the task assigned to him were an old inhabitant of this place. Supposing that one of you who have lived all your lives here, and were all day employed in some occupation which brought you into constant intercourse

with all your neighbours of all ranks; supposing, I say, that such a one had these tables of the names from this town before him, how different would the list be to you from what it would be to the stranger. You would say to yourself, as your eye glanced from name to name, "I know this person, and this, and this." Their faces and forms would rise up with greater or less distinctness on the mirror of your recollection. You would unavoidably think of the character of each one, whether he was good or bad, kind or unkind, religious or irreligious. You would think, perhaps, how it was that you knew each one, and how long you had known him. You would have certain feelings of regard or disregard respecting some at least, perhaps of love or dislike respecting others. You would, in fact, know them—know them, not as names, but as persons. Your interest in them, however slight, would be far greater than that of an utter stranger who might be employed to classify them in tables, or arrange them in columns; and yet how little would you really know about them, except, perhaps, about a very few! Of the greater part of them you would have only some dim recollection; of their features perhaps, or of some peculiarity in their manners or address. I dare say that you would not be able to give a tolerably accurate account of the circumstances or character of above one hundred—that is, if you are in the

habit of minding your own business and are not an eaves-dropper, or scandal-monger, or busy-body ; for, in that case, you would probably be able to give a bad account of many more.

And yet we have supposed that they have been your neighbours. You have been in constant intercourse with them, you have played with them as children, you have spoken to them almost every day in the street, you have been with them to the House of God on the Sunday, and bought of them, or sold to them, during the week. And yet how little do you really know of any one of them ! You cannot read the thoughts of one of them. Each one of them has a world within him all to himself, and of this you only know just the surface, as much as he chooses to tell you. There may be a life of God, a faint spark from heaven, in those you give up for lost ; and there may be some cherished sin, eating like a canker into the soul which you think to be altogether the habitation of God.

Now, it is a most awful and yet a most salutary thing to realise that there is a Being Who knows everything that can be known of these millions of names. Not only does He know every name, but He has before Him every fact of the past, present, and future life of him who bears it. He numbers the hairs on their heads. He has now in His memory every word that each one of them has ever spoken, from the time when he began to articulate ; every idle word

as well as every good word, every oath and every prayer, every word of temptation to sin, and every word of reproof of sin. He has all before Him at every moment. Though we read in Scripture of God's books, in which He registers sins unrepented of and out of which He blots sins forgiven, yet we are to remember that this is written in accommodation to our weakness and ignorance. It means that He has as perfect a consciousness of all that we have said or done as if it were written down with pen and ink and the writing spread out before Him. Just as what is written down never alters and never decays, but is as durable as the materials on which, or with which, it is written, so with God's knowledge and God's remembrance of all.

We can take an illustration of this from a well-known incident in St. John's Gospel. Our Lord had never seen the woman of Samaria ere He met her by the well, and yet He brought before her the chief events of her past life; how she was sinning then, and how she had sinned in past time; and if it had been needful, He could have confronted her with every circumstance of her wicked life instead of with one or two only.

Now, as it was with Christ and this woman so it is now with God and with every soul whose name is taken in this census of the millions of England. He could this moment

make each one of them distinctly conscious of the history of each day and each hour of his life hitherto. It is said, that He often does so at the moment when death is impending. Most of you, I should suppose, have heard of the fact that men who have been rescued from such a death as drowning have told us that when life had become all but extinct, and the soul was just about to enter the separate state, it became conscious of every event in its past existence. It seemed as if the memory of every circumstance of a long life was slumbering in the soul, and the near approach of judgment awoke it, and it started into consciousness, and the man has his whole life before him; every sin, every error, every action, indifferent or not, all rise up at once like apparitions, so that a man lives his life over again in a moment. I know as a friend a pious clergyman who has experienced all that I am saying, and I have heard of several other cases.

Now we see from this that nothing which we have done is really lost. No word, for instance, is lost. It has died away in the air, it has apparently escaped from the memory, but it exists yet. It is distinctly in the mind of the Great God Who counts the sands of the sea-shore, and the stars of heaven, and the drops of rain. Oh, let slanderers, let swearers, let men of unclean and polluted lips, tremble to think that all their words are remembered by

One, and that One the One of all others that they would wish should forget them, even by the God Who has engaged to bring all into judgment! How great, then, how infinitely great, must He be Who can thus hold in His knowledge all these names, and the persons whom they represent, and the lives they have led, and the characters they have acquired! How needful that we should be at peace with Him, and that we should be preparing for the day, unknown to us, but known to Him, when He will summon us to the bar of His judgment!

But to proceed. At each census a different population is taken. The officers charged with this duty will this week take the names of multitudes who have come into the world since the last enumeration ten years ago. And multitudes who were then in health and strength will have passed into the unseen state, there to await the judgment of the great day.

In the course of forty or fifty years the whole mass of the population of a country is changed. A very small fraction of those who were taken fifty years ago are now alive. How many generations have passed away since Adam was created, or since Noah came out of the ark to re-people the earth! Think of the empires that have since then passed away, and the cities that have become heaps of ruins. Take as an example the great city of Nineveh many hundred years before Christ, in Jonah's

time. It was then as large as London is now, and, if we can judge of it from its remains, far more magnificent. It was then as populous, perhaps much more so. It was then an ancient city. For many hundred years had its kings numbered their people and sent forth their armies, the "soles of whose feet dried up the rivers of besieged places," and yet this mighty city is now without inhabitants. A few years ago men thought that even its ruins had perished, but since then they have dug into the earth and discovered the foundations of its palaces, buried for above two thousand years. But though the city is no longer, where are the souls; the souls to whom Jonah preached repentance, the souls of those who gave them being, and the souls of those to whom they in their turn gave being? Where are these? Have they perished utterly? No, my brethren, they are all in God's safe keeping. He has His eye upon the very particles of their bodies long mingled with the dust. And He has in His books, that is, in His own most perfect knowledge, all the deeds done in those bodies, and all are reserved for the judgment-seat of His Son at the last day. And so it is with multitudes of cities like Nineveh, of which the memory has perished utterly. Their names are forgotten, but every soul is in God's hand for judgment or for mercy. Now, what an overwhelming thought is this, that the many

hundreds of millions now living, and the many thousands of millions that have passed away, are all in God's hands; not a word of their lips or a thought of their hearts forgotten of God! And remember, that all this is no exaggeration. On the contrary, it is impossible to overstate the truth of God's foreknowledge, providence, and judgment. It all arises from the fact that the God Who made all things and upholds all things is infinite. Because we are men, and so finite creatures, we know a few people, and remember a few more, imperfectly: because God is God—the Infinite God—He knows all men, and remembers all about them perfectly. He would not be God if He did not.

Now, my brethren, when we seriously consider all this; when we seriously consider how this great God, Whose understanding and knowledge are thus unbounded, how He looks upon sin and evil, and how much He sees of sin and evil—we cannot but wonder at His bearing with a world in which He sees and has seen for six thousand years so much wickedness. What a view does it give us of the truth of the saying of the Psalmist, "God is a righteous Judge, strong and patient, and God is provoked every day!"

How is it that this "righteous Judge," provoked daily by man's sin, and strong to punish, how is it, I say, that He has borne and still bears so patiently with such a race? You who have so lately kept Holy Week; you who have

so lately stood under the cross on Good Friday ; you who have rejoiced that death was vanquished on Easter Day, you know. You know that when God's eye looks back, and surveys the countless myriads of men who have sinned, His eye rests upon One Who knew no sin. You know that when God's eye looks back upon myriads of evil deeds of men, that eye rests upon the holy Life and the endurance unto death of One Who pleased Him in all things. You know that amidst myriads of deaths there is One Death which He Himself set forth to be the means of reconciliation, for by this Death He overcame death.

What a view does this give us of the amazing nature of the Redemption effected by Jesus Christ! The Death of Jesus Christ was in some mysterious sense considered by God to be an equivalent, and more than an equivalent, for all the sins of the myriads of sinners who have ever lived. I am aware of the difficulty which some find in this mode of describing the effects of the Death of Christ, but it is inherent in the very word Redemption. A prisoner or captive is redeemed by a ransom, and the Death of Jesus was accepted in the unseen world, and before the bar of Almighty God, just as a ransom for forfeited lives or liberties would be accepted amongst men.

Think, then, of all the names which will be sent up this week at the census, and think of

One Man being able to ransom all,—One Man's Death being accepted on behalf of all. Think of the myriads who have lived and died between Creation and to-day, and think that one Death was the Redemption of all. How overwhelming then, my brethren, the thought of the truths of God's Judgment and of Christ's Atonement, when we consider the numbers whom God will judge according to His perfect knowledge, and whom Christ has redeemed by His perfect Life and perfect submission in death.

Remember too, as following upon all this, that each one of the myriads whose names will this week be taken is in one of two states in the sight of God. If God were now to summon you by death, or if Jesus were now to come to judgment, your state would be eternally fixed. God only knows in what spiritual condition your soul would be found, but He assuredly does know. There are two states, in one or other of which we all are. There is a line, on one side or other of which we all stand. Man does not know for certainty, perhaps in a single case, on which side of this line any one human being is; God knows with certainty the side on which every human being stands.

There are various expressions in Scripture used to describe this state. Men are said to be justified; to be accepted; to be reconciled to God; to have oil in their lamps; to be clad with a wedding garment; to be in Christ, to abide

in Christ ; to be found in Him. Sometimes, as the result of all, they are simply said to be righteous ; to stand in the judgment ; to stand before the Son of Man ; to be trees bringing forth good fruit ; to be wheat, and not tares. Now though God will eventually judge you, remember, for your soul's sake, that you must judge yourself, and ascertain for yourself in which of these two conditions you are abiding.

Take two expressions of the foregoing—to be in Christ ; to be righteous. Christ is the Righteous One. Now you cannot be in Christ, and be unrighteous. You know what the life of Christ was ; how every form of goodness and righteousness met in Him. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners—separate from sinners, that is, in character and aim, whilst living amongst sinners, receiving them, eating with them, conversing with them.

Now if you are in Christ for the very purpose for which Christ came amongst us and allows us to be grafted into Him, you must be “in” Him so as to be becoming like Him in every department of righteousness. The Church teaches you to sing in the words of the Holy Ghost, “that we, being delivered from the hands of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our lives.” And if you think a little you will see that it must be so ; for to be *in* Christ means to be *in* Him spiritually and for spiritual

purposes, as a vine branch is in a vine naturally and for natural purposes ; that is, for bearing that fruit which is naturally produced in the branch by such sap as the vine stem supplies it with.

As the vine branch produces fruit according to the nature of the vine, so the Christian produces fruit according to the nature of Christ. What the fruits of that nature were in Christ, so they are intended to be in him that is so joined to Him, as to be "in" Him. About these fruits there can be no dispute ; they are too well known.

Do not then, for your soul's sake, imagine that you are in Christ because you have once had some strong and lively feelings, and have different views to what you once had of the work of Christ and of the Spirit. You trust only in the merits of Christ ; but do you strive against and pray against sin—sins of the tongue, for instance ? How many professing Christians are careless of what they say, provided they can gain their ends ! Are you true and just in all your dealings ? How many of those whom we call the children of this world put professedly religious people to shame for unselfishness, for care about others, for devoted attention to the welfare of those who have claims upon them ! All such things are to be taken into account if you would know whether you are righteous, in the favour of God, justified in Christ, accepted in the Beloved.

Try yourself, then, as to whether in any true sense you "follow Christ." This it is which the eye of your Heavenly Father looks for. He looks for Christians as like as possible to His Own Son. If you are in Christ, you trust in Christ; you look to Him; you pray earnestly and continually in His name. If you are in Christ you mortify the flesh, with its affections and lusts; you strive earnestly and pray heartily to live a godly, righteous, and sober life. A godly life—a life, that is, as in the presence of God, as if His eye were ever upon you, and His love within you; a righteous life—that is, an upright, straightforward, honest, just, and truthful life; a sober life—that is, a temperate, well-ordered, and, if God calls you to it, a mortified, self-denying life.

XIX.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF HEARERS.

LUKE viii. 18.

“Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.”

CHRISTIANS may be divided into two classes: those who teach and those who are taught, those who preach, and those who listen.

At first sight the warning of the Saviour, “Take heed how ye hear,” seems to be addressed to those who are taught, and seems to be a very solemn caution to the hearers of the preached word to make them careful above all things as to how they profit by what they are taught; but the words are in reality spoken to teachers, and with especial reference to their teaching, and a very little attention to what goes before will make this plain. Jesus Christ had been setting forth the parable of the sower, and instead of, as we should have expected, explaining the parable to the multitudes, He withheld the hidden meaning of it from the crowd, or left them to guess at its meaning, and privately expounded it to His disciples. After He had explained it, He gave

them to understand that this secret, or, as it is sometimes called, esoteric instruction in the hidden meaning of His teaching by parables was not for themselves but for all. All could not, it is true, receive it then, but all—all, that is, who embraced the Gospel—were to be taught it in due time. So that there was to be no secret instruction to be withheld from the great body of believers; even the Apostles themselves were but depositories of high truths, stewards of God's mysteries, and, as stewards, they must faithfully dispense what had been intrusted to their keeping. "No man," Christ says, "when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel or putteth it under a bed, but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light." By this One who lights the candle, our Saviour means Himself; by the candle He especially means the Apostles; by the lighting of the candle, He means the instruction which He was then and always giving to the Apostles, and by his setting the candle on the candlestick He means the conspicuous position in which He was about to set the Apostles, so that they should not propagate the saving truths of His word for the benefit of a few, but in the ears of the world itself.

"Well, then," it is as if He said, "seeing that ye are My candles, lighted by Myself to give saving light to My church, and I am now 'lighting' you by my special teaching of things

which I, at present, hide from the world, take heed how ye hear. Ye are not like a dead lamp or candle, such as is in every house, which lamp or candle must give light if only it be lit, and not put into a place of concealment; but ye are living lamps, living candles, and your power of giving light, and so of serving My purposes of grace, depends not only upon My endeavouring to light you, but upon your submitting yourselves to be lit by Me. I may apply the light of My truth to you in order to kindle and inflame you, so that you in your turn should lighten others; but this is not enough, your will must work with mine; you must not only hear, listlessly and drowsily and carelessly hear, as if the mere *hearing* were enough, and you have done all when you have not, like some, absolutely shut fast and closed your ears; but you must take heed how you hear, for your future usefulness and reward will depend upon your present profiting. ‘To you that hear shall more be given.’ The more you take heed the more you will lay by in store of precious truth; and so when the time comes that you will be tried as to whether you are fit to go forth in My name—to you that hear, that is, to you that have profited and hid My words and their meaning in your hearts—to you shall more be given. You shall receive the fulness of Divine light and love, and from you that have not taken heed (and

there is one), even that which you seem to have shall be taken away."

And now, my brethren, if these words must have sounded full of solemn warning in the ears of Apostles, how should they sound in our ears?

"Take heed," the Saviour says to us, "how ye hear." If, even when Jesus taught, men had to take heed lest they heard to no purpose, or to an evil purpose, how much more should men take heed when the servants of Jesus preach! For the words of the servants are not like the words of the Master. The words of the servants are such as man has spoken before and will speak again. The words of Jesus are the words of One Who spake as never man spake, and yet the words of Jesus Himself did not, of themselves, save the soul; for even His words required faith, attention, submission, obedience, in those that heard, if the hearers were not to be among the number of those who, hearing, heard, and did not understand. And remember that preaching is now, just as it was in the time of Christ, an ordinance of God for the salvation of souls which nothing can supersede. Remember, too, that though the preaching is different, our words being far below the words of Christ in grace and power, yet that this very fact only enhances the importance of another fact which we have on the authority of the Holy Ghost, which is, that the Church has this treasure

in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

Seeing then that our ministry is so imperfect, our words so imperfect, our lives at the best so below the pattern of the life of Jesus, "Take heed how ye hear."

But seeing also that we are ambassadors of Christ, beseeching you in Christ's name to be reconciled to God—seeing that we have the ministry of reconciliation, and that we all preach the Cross of Christ, that is, we proclaim forgiveness through His Death, and that the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness, but to them who are being saved it is the power of God, "Take heed how ye hear."

"Take heed how ye hear." With all the multitude of sermons which are preached (and it is said that the yearly number of sermons in this country alone is to be computed by millions) I believe that there never was more need of this precept than at this moment. It is not that sermons are not listened to, or not listened to attentively. I believe that they are; but "take heed how ye hear" does not mean "take heed that ye sit and listen," or take heed that ye are instructed, or pleased, or amused; but, take heed that ye profit; take heed that ye are changed, strengthened, edified, made more penitent, more believing, more hopeful, more holy, more loving; take heed that, at

the last, ye may have something to shew for your hearing, some work which will stand the fire of judgment, to prove at the last that you have not heard in vain.

Now, I believe that the very glut of preaching makes it most imperative on us to attend to these words of Christ; for men and women who believe and acknowledge that it is their duty to attend to many things in religion, are very far from realising that they must take heed how they *hear*. Many, for instance, who think that it is quite right that the preacher should tell them that they must take heed how they pray, how they praise God, above all, how they take the Holy Communion, are very slow in their hearts to believe that their first duty is to take heed how they hear.

You are quite prepared, nay, you expect me to tell you, that you must take heed how you pray—that you must pray to God, Who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth—that you must pray sincerely, earnestly, with a devout submission to God's will, with the faith that God hears you, and is more ready to hear than you are to pray—that you must pray with thoughts intent upon the matter of your petitions, so that you may not mock God by moving your lips only whilst your heart is in the ends of the earth.

Again, you all expect that when I allude to the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ I should by all means caution you

against receiving it without faith—that I should tell you, as if you had never heard it before, that it can be no benefit if received as a charm, or passport to Heaven, and so on.

And yet I dare say that you would think that I was somewhat guilty of self-assertion if I were to take up the words of my Master, and say, as I assuredly shall before I have done this evening, “Take heed how ye hear what I preach.”

You would, some of you, perhaps, be very willing that I should say, “Take heed that ye are not deceived by anything that I tell you; take heed that ye compare what I say with the Bible;” though God knows that very few of you indeed are able to compare any sermon with the Bible. You may be able to measure the sermon by a few texts, which the leaders of the religious world assume to be the Bible, but as to having such a general knowledge of the contents of the whole book that you are able to judge whether any sermon accords with the whole tenor of Scripture, I much doubt whether there are half a dozen among you that can do so.

No; when Christ says, “Take heed how ye hear,” He does not allude to the matter that is preached, whether it be doctrinally correct, or more or less erroneous. He does at other times warn His disciples, and, through them, us, that men may be led astray by false teaching. He warns us of this when he says, “Beware of false

prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." Again, He speaks of one of the dangers of the last days as being false prophets and false Christs rising up, who shall deceive, if possible, the very elect; and His Apostle warns the Church against those who after their own lusts heap to themselves teachers having itching ears. So, of course there is great and increasing danger of being led astray by erroneous teaching; but Jesus Christ here for the time puts this danger out of sight; He presupposes (if, that is, we are to take His words as addressed to us as well as to the Apostles,) He presupposes, I say, the teaching to be either the pure truth, or, at least, to contain so much of the truth as will at last condemn those who do not receive what truth there is in it; and so He says, "Take heed how ye hear."

Now, dismissing all care or caution about erroneous teaching as in the present case irrelevant, I will consider preaching generally to be an ordinance of God for the salvation of souls, according to the tenor of the Apostle's words: "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe;" and I will also take my own preaching, that is, what I preach more or less distinctly in every sermon, and what you yourselves acknowledge to be true and right, by your joining audibly in prayers, and creeds, and hymns, and confessions

of sin, which have exactly the same meaning as the words which I preach; and I will say to you, "Take heed how ye hear."

Now first of all I will take "repentance," or "conversion to God." There is not, I believe, a single sermon which I or my brother ministers preach which has not *that* in it which, if taken heed to, would lead you to repentance. Take the ordinary topics which it would be difficult to exclude from any one's sermons—the love of God, the terrors of the Lord, the last judgment, that we must all be judged for the deeds done in the body, the uncertainty of life, the need of holiness, the work of the Holy Spirit, Christian graces, Christian virtues, Christian tempers, the true Christian's character, his privileges, hopes, conflicts. It would be a very difficult thing to preach a sermon not alluding to one or more of these things, and yet if the sermon in which any one of these things were dwelt upon were but "taken heed to" in the sense in which the Saviour says "take heed," it would unquestionably lead to repentance, or conversion to God. If the preacher preaches on the love of God in any one of its thousand manifestations, and the hearer "takes heed," he must ask himself, How am I meeting and returning this love? Do I love or even seek to love Him Who has so loved me, and is Himself so worthy of my love? And steadily keeping such questions as this before the soul, that is, "taking heed,"

would lead to sorrow at having so ill requited such love, and to a determination to pray and strive to love Him Who has so loved us, and this would lead to, nay rather it would itself be, true conversion, or turning to God.

Again, does the preacher preach on the "terrors of the Lord?" The soul that takes any heed how it hears must ask, "Am I deprecating this wrath and fleeing from it, or am I treasuring it up against myself?" and the "taking heed" to this would undoubtedly lead to repentance.

Again, the uncertainty of life must make the heedful soul ask, Am I prepared if God should summon me hence? Any word about the holiness without which no man shall see God must suggest the question, Am I Holy? Do I ever pray that my heart may be cleansed, and made fit for the presence of Him Whom the pure in heart alone shall see?

Again, does the preacher insist on the Person and work of the Spirit, the heedful hearer must ask, Do I partake of, am I led by, the Holy Spirit? Here is a Person in the Ever Blessed Trinity given to us or promised to us; and have I lived as if I had even the promise of so great a Gift? If not, surely my first duty is to have my heart and mind changed with respect to the indwelling of so blessed a Guest, and to pray earnestly that His sanctifying work may be begun and continued and perfected in me.

Again, any mention of Christian privileges must suggest the question, What are these privileges to me? Am I cultivating them or am I forfeiting them? Any mention of the Christian's hopes must suggest the question, "Are these hopes, are the hopes of good men, my hopes?" And the pressing home of such questions must lead to a change of heart with respect to God, and to the revelation of His mercy in Christ; and this is repentance. So that not one single topic of the usual commonplace truths of which sermons are full but must suggest to the man who "takes heed" to it such heart questions as will lead him to repentance, if he presses on in the line of solemn and serious inquiry it sets before him.

And now I will revert again to my own preaching respecting the One Great Object of all faith, even Jesus Christ, and I believe that my preaching is in this great matter one with a multitude, and an increasing multitude, of my brethren.

I have constantly and habitually, I may say in almost every sermon, in some shape or other brought forward the Incarnation of the Eternal Son of God. I have preached, that is, that He is, in One person, God and Man—that having the fulness of the Divine Nature in Him bodily, He was able by His death to make an Atonement for all sin. I have constantly joined together His Divine Nature and His

Sacrifice for sin; for how can I call upon you to exercise any firm intelligent trust in the Blood of One Who died a shameful death ages ago, unless that Man have in Him some wondrous quality, or dignity, or power, to make His Death of such surpassing worth? And that which is in Him to effect this is, His Godhead; for Jesus is very God made flesh.

I have constantly brought before you the love that God the Father showed in sending such an One. I have constantly brought forward the miracles performed by Jesus as proof of His divine power and of His willingness to raise us from spiritual death, and feed us supernaturally with the bread of life, and restore our spiritual sight, and heal every disease of our souls.

I have constantly set Him forth as ever present. I have constantly set forth that His Mediation and Intercession are being constantly exercised on your behalf.

Well, if I preach that God sent His own Son, His well-beloved, His Eternal Word, His Express Image, and you "take heed how ye hear," must it not make you think in your heart, What a state the world must be in! What a state man's soul must be in! How inexpressibly serious must be the whole condition of human nature, if it was needful that God Himself should come in the flesh to save us! "Am I alive to it all?" you must say to

yourself; “for how very intent God must be about my eternal well-being if He took such an interest in the salvation from sin of myself and of my fellow men!”

Again, if we preach that God’s own Son shed His Blood, having first assumed a nature which had blood to be shed, and you take heed how you hear, take heed with the heed which such a truth demands, must it not make you ask in your heart, “With such a Death died for me, am I reconciled to God? With such Blood shed for me, am I washed clean? With such a Mediator betwixt God and myself, am I coming to God through Him?”

Again, if we preach Jesus, God and Man, dying for us and rising again, and now in heaven itself, at the Right Hand of God, that is, in the highest place in the universe, and you take heed how you hear so astonishingly gracious a truth, must it not breed faith in you?—if, that is, faith be trust. For if you take due heed how you hear, that Christ is so great and yet stooped so low—your God and yet your Elder Brother—must you not trust? Can you help trusting that the Merits of such an One are all-sufficient, that the Blood of such an One is all-atoning, that though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow? “Wash me,” you will say, with humble confidence, knowing what That is Which has been shed to wash you, “wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

You will fear to doubt about the forgiveness of sins if you have faithfully and with full purpose of heart brought all your sins before God, that they may be forgiven through the Merits and Death of One equal with God.

Again, if I preach, as I and every one of my brother ministers do, that the Blood of the Son of God made man was shed to buy you, and you at all take heed to what you hear, you will constantly and habitually feel that you are not your own, that you are bought to be the servants of God and of Christ, and so that, as a good servant, you should do your best to please your Master, even God, and so that you should not live as you will, or as your neighbours or the world wills, but as God wills?

Take heed how ye hear.

Take heed how ye hear our repeated invitations to you, to come and receive the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. If you take any heed to these you must believe and remember that God came amongst us to shed His Blood for us, and that in order to make us partakers of that Blood of the New Covenant shed for us for the remission of sins, He ordained this Sacrament. Put these things together, and for your soul's sake "take heed how ye hear." If ye take heed to it ye must say in yourselves, Here is an ordinance which must indeed be needful if it was ordained by such a One and at such a time. Here is that

which tests my grateful remembrance of Christ. Here is that by which I am to show forth His Death before God and before my brethren. Here is a thing which, if words have any meaning, must confer exceedingly great blessings—a serious thing to partake of, and a very serious thing, indeed, to neglect.

“Take heed how ye hear;” for the Saviour goes on to say, For whosoever hath, to him shall be given. If your hearing in this world has worked faith in you, that faith shall be exchanged for sight. You shall see the glories which you now receive on trust. If that hearing has bred in you hope, that hope shall be exchanged for fruition. You shall no longer hope for the peace, the joy, the rest, the sinlessness, the fervour of the New Jerusalem. You shall enjoy all these. If it has wrought in you love, that love shall be deepened, strengthened, purified, and in its exercise you shall rejoice with the joy of Christ Himself, when He says to you, “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

XX.

ABIDING IN CHRIST.

AN EXPOSITION.

1 JOHN iii. 5—8.

“Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins ; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him, sinneth not : whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him. Little children, let no man deceive you : he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil ; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.”

THIS is a difficult place of Scripture. It looks at first sight to be an easy one, for it is made up of plain simple words ; and yet it has exercised the expositors of Scripture more than most others ; so that you have need to offer up a silent prayer for me, that I may explain it and enforce it, and that you may receive it, and understand it, aright.

“Ye know,” the Apostle says, “that he was manifested to take away our sins.” How was the Son of God manifested? He was first manifested at His Birth into the world, by His coming amongst us on the night when the Angels sang “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.”

But He has to be manifested separately to

each soul. We read in Scripture that He was thus manifested to different persons in divers ways. He was manifested to the wise men by the Star; to St. John the Baptist by the Holy Ghost descending upon Him in a bodily shape like a dove. He was manifested to three of the Apostles at His Transfiguration; to the people of the Jews, though in a lesser degree, by His wonderful works. He was manifested above all to be the Eternal Son of God by His Resurrection from the dead, and by the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost.

He has been manifested, that is, made known to you and to me, my brethren, by the preaching of the Gospel, by the teaching of Christian parents and Christian instructors. To some of us, perhaps, He has been manifested, as He was of old, "in the breaking of bread." He is manifested, above all, to the soul in an unspeakable way by the power of the Holy Ghost: so that the soul is conscious that His eye is upon her in love, in pity, in forbearance; so that continually, in the midst of other things, in the midst of lawful worldly business, or in the converse of friends, as well as in the sanctuary, your heart is lifted up, and in thought you picture to yourself One in unspeakable glory, and yet with His hands and His feet and His side pierced, looking down upon you.

Well, the Eternal Son of God was and is yet thus manifested—manifested to our faith as

God in the flesh, and why? For one purpose, the text tells us. It seems for two purposes, for in the fifth verse it is said, "He was manifested to take away our sins," and in the eighth, He was manifested that "He might destroy the works of the devil." But these two purposes are really but one. Our sins, the alienation from God in our hearts occasioned by them, the wrath of God towards us for them, the degradation of body and darkening of soul, and hardness of heart and spiritual death brought on by their indwelling in us—all these consequences of sin are the works of the Devil. He has worked them in us by sin, and the Son of God was manifested for this one purpose, by the taking away of sin to undo the work of Satan in our alienation, degradation, and spiritual death.

"In Him is no sin." If Satan had had any part in Him whatsoever—if He had not been perfectly pure and sinless, He could not have taken away our sins. If He was to be the Lamb of God, He must be the Immaculate Lamb, and the smallest seed of sin in Him would have vitiated and rendered of none effect all His Sacrifice. And now the Apostle goes on to say how it is the intention of God that Christ's work of deliverance from sin should be perfected in each one of us. "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not." What, then, is the meaning of this "abiding in Him?"

Now you have to remember that it was the same Apostle who wrote both the Gospel which bears his name and the Epistle from which my text is taken. This Apostle is the only one who speaks about our "abiding in Christ;" and when he says, "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not" in this place, he evidently has in his eye certain words of our Lord which he himself recorded in his Gospel. Now there are two remarkable places in which our Lord speaks of abiding in Him. In the first of these (John vi. 56) our Lord, in the words "Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me and I in him," uses the same word which we have in the text; the word "dwelling" in the Gospel being precisely the same word as the term "abiding" in the Epistle.

But the place to which St. John evidently refers when he speaks about Christians abiding in Christ, is our Lord's parable of the Vine and the branches (St. John xv. 1—6). "I am," He there says, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. . . . Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." In

these words of Christ the Christian's relation to His great Head, that is, His union with Him, is compared to the union between the branch of a tree and the tree itself. As long as the branch is joined to the tree it receives of the sap, the goodness of the tree. If the branch is severed from the trunk, then it is deprived of its nourishment, and begins to die; or if, owing to any obstruction, the sap cannot flow into the branch, then it becomes weak and fruitless; it cankers and withers away. So it is with the Christian and Christ. So long as the Christian is united to Christ by the means of grace received in faith, so long he bears fruit. Here we see the respective places of faith and sacraments. The infant of Christian parents is grafted into Christ at the time of Baptism, but as he grows up he must be taught the truths of Christ's gospel and have Christ presented to the eye of his faith; and he must himself come to Christ, especially in the devout reception of Holy Communion. It is by this that his union with Christ is continued. If it were not so we should in fact make the falling away of any Christian from Christ to be owing to God: and most religiously must we keep from that.

Now here let me pause and say a few words to you, which may, by God's grace, impress upon you the exceeding importance of training up children as if they were Christ's, and were grafted into Him as His members. You bring

your children to the font, and then present them to be taken by Christ into the arms of His mercy. That is well, but it is only the beginning. It is only the sowing of the seed, the inserting of the tender graft: if you bring them to the font, and then take them away to homes where they hear words of blasphemy and lewdness, God's name taken in vain, and God's Day profaned by those who, through their years of infancy and childhood, they are bound to love, honour, and succour; if you bring them to Holy Baptism, and then take them back to homes where there is no family prayer, no family acknowledgment of God; and you never teach them how grievously sin wounds that Holy Saviour into Whom they have been baptized; if you never teach them that, when they have done wrong, they must not only beg your forgiveness, but God's also, through Jesus Christ; and if you never correct them when they tell falsehoods, and use wicked words and deceive, and yet chastise them unmercifully. when they break a cup or a plate, why, you are bringing them up as if they had been baptized into Satan, and not into Christ. You are, at least, like one who would sow a tender plant, and then trample upon it, and crush all life out of it with the sole of his foot.

And now to return to the text: "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not." What means the Apostle by this? Does he mean that any

number of Christians are sinless like the angels? He cannot mean this, for in the very first chapter of the Epistle he writes the very familiar words, "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Do, then, any Christians whatsoever abide in Christ, for what Christian is there who would not use the words of our confession: "We have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep?" If he that abideth in Christ sinneth not, does any Christian whatsoever abide in Christ?

Now this is the great difficulty of this wonderful passage, and so men have tried to explain it by explaining it away, by depriving it of all its force. They have said that the Apostle means, whosoever abideth in Christ doth not commit any great or gross sin, or whosoever abideth in Him doth not continue in sin, or whosoever abideth in Him doth not sin wilfully. But all these explanations are contrary to the express declaration of the Apostle: "All unrighteousness is sin." "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." They are contrary to the words of his brother Apostle respecting the essential unity of God's law: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

And then, with respect to the explanation that the Apostle means wilful sin. What, I ask, makes sin to be sinful, except the will, which consents to the evil thing?

No, the Apostle does not mean "Whosoever abideth in him doth not sin grossly, or habitually, or wilfully."

He means a much deeper and more awful thing. He means emphatically to contradict the idea that any sin is compatible with a true, life-giving, and continuous state of union with Christ. For the state of union with Christ implies, first, the being baptized into the Death of the sinless Son of God Who died for the one purpose of saving men from all sin, so that all they who are baptized should (to use the words of another Apostle) "reckon themselves dead unto sin and alive unto God." It implies also, does this state of union with Christ, our growing up in Him. It implies the partaking of His Body and Blood in such a true and real and heavenly way that he who so eats and drinks dwells in Christ and Christ in him. This being so, the Apostle means to give his most emphatic contradiction to the notion always springing up, always reappearing, that real union with Christ, however you may describe it or express it, is compatible with sin. Now you often hear it said that such or such a man is a religious man, or an enlightened man, or a converted man, but he acts inconsistently with his *profession*, as it is called, in such or such ways. He takes advantage of you in dealing with you, he exceeds in this or that matter of indulgence, he does not strictly adhere to the truth, he bears malice, he slanders,

and so on; but, after all, he is regenerate, enlightened, converted.

And so it is tacitly assumed that a Christian may make a profession, as it is called, and do certain evil things, provided he does not go too far.

Now the Apostle has it in his mind flatly to contradict all this. "No," he says; the true life of the Christian is union with Christ, being in Christ, according to His own words, abiding in Him, and so receiving grace from Him just as a branch receives its life from the tree of which it is a branch. Now in Christ is no sin, so consequently the man who commits sin, by so doing there and then casts himself out of Christ, loses his hold of Christ, and does not regain it till he confesses his sin to God and is restored by the grace of Christ. Much light is thrown upon this by the latter part of the verse, "Who-soever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him." This is one of the comparatively few places of importance in the New Testament which require the translation to be rectified if we are to understand its true scope. As it stands, it seems to teach that one single sight of Christ with the soul's eye, or once to have known Him by faith, will make sin to be impossible in him who has had this grace of the sight of Christ vouchsafed to him from God; but this is manifestly contrary to much in the rest of Scripture, as well as to all experience. It is so manifest that even those who have experi-

mentally known Christ do fall into sin at times, that the verse becomes, as it stands, almost useless for any practical purpose. But it is perfectly intelligible, if we remember that the tense of the Greek verb is very inadequately translated in our English version. Strictly rendered into our language—and here I am giving not my own opinion, but that of the man who, of all amongst us, has given most time and labour to the translation and interpretation of the New Testament—strictly rendered, the verse runs, “Whosoever sinneth doth not see Him, neither know Him.”

The verse then implies that the man who keeps the eye of his faith—his spiritual eye—on Christ, cannot sin; and if he falls into any sin whatsoever it is because he is not looking to Christ. The eye of his faith—the eye of his soul or spirit—is not on Christ, but has for the time turned from Him. Something has been allowed to intervene between Christ and the eye of his inner man. He has taken his eye off Christ, even though but for a moment, and thus has enabled his ever watchful adversary to enter into him.

The words, “Whosoever sinneth doth not see Him, neither know Him,” teaches us that there is a realising experimental knowledge of Christ which saves from the commission of sin, and that he who commits sin by the very act loses the hold which his heart and faith had on Christ—

loses it till he repents and is restored. And if you think a little, you will see that it must be so. Christ is so pure, so good, so full of grace, He is so lovely with the beauty of holiness, that the internal sight, the realising knowledge of Him, cannot subsist with sin. There are certain mere men even for whom you have such respect that, in their company, you could not do an unworthy act; and if it be so with the servant, what must it be with the Master, if, by God's grace, you see Him; if, by the power and the teaching of the Spirit, you know Him?

"Well then," you will say, "if the Apostle means this, that the Christian who commits sin by so doing casts himself out of Christ, and loses sight of Him till, on his repentance, God restores him"—if the Apostle, you will say, means this, then how inexpressibly serious is our state, with what dangers are we encompassed, and how terrible to us is our liability to fall; how narrow is the way to life, what a fight—what a continuous life-long fight we have to maintain!

Precisely so: this *is* what he means, and he actually *says* something stronger than all this that you and I have supposed him to *mean*. At any rate, he does indeed mean to impress upon us that the way of life is narrow, that the good fight is a hard and a long fight, and that the Christian robe is not kept unsullied without very great watchfulness.

And the words of the next verse still more open out and make clear his meaning: "Little children, let no man deceive you. He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous; he that committeth sin is of the devil."

"Little children;" he had a right to call them so, for he was an aged father in Christ; nay, more, an Apostle, one of the chiefest Apostles; and they were children, and, like little children, they were simple; and so they were easily taken in, as children must be, by the pretensions of men who were not what they professed to be.

"Let no man deceive you." Let no man, no matter what his pretensions, no matter what his seeming unction and grace, no matter how sweetly he speaks of Jesus and His love, and about resting on Him, and being complete in Him—let no man, no, not even if he come as an Angel of light—let no man deceive you. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." There can be, as far as I can see, but one application of the Apostle's words. They can but mean that the true Christian, the true child of God, the true Saint, the righteous and good man, is the man who does what is right and good in the sight of God. He must not only be accepted through the righteousness of his Saviour, but he must be made righteous by his Saviour. He must not only stand in

Him, but he must stand by Him; that is, he must be supported by Christ's strength so that he stands *upright*.

Wonderful it is that in a country so full of Bibles there should be any doubt about this; that, in fact, it should be needful to state it; and yet there are people who speak as if it were not so, and these fair spoken people, people who profess to honour Christ, to honour Him more than others, to be peculiarly jealous about His having the sole glory of our Salvation.

I will give two instances.

A few months ago I spent a short time in a large, gay, wealthy, fashionable city of the west of England—a city full, far more than almost any other that I am acquainted with, of idle, wealthy persons; no place requiring, one would think, more frequent setting forth of the severe aspect of our religion, that it is hard for those that have riches to enter into the Kingdom of God, that the gate is strait, the way narrow, and that the way of life is the way of the cross, and such things. I heard there a clergyman of some eminence preach to a crowded congregation in the principal church on the words, “Ye are complete in Him.” And the whole gist of the sermon was that, if a man was once in Christ he was safe for ever. All his deficiencies were supplied without any trouble or thought upon his part. The Almighty looked upon him

only through the medium of His Son, and all he had to do was to rejoice in Christ. In fact, to repose upon Christ; for after all it came to that.

I could not, having heard this, help asking myself, Could the man who so preached have ever read, even though but once, that Epistle from a scrap of which he was preaching? If he had done so he would have discovered that the very last thing in the Apostle's thoughts was that sort of completeness which he preached; a completeness in Christ which makes a man contented with incomplete holiness, incomplete goodness, incomplete truth.

Then, again, I went to another place, where they were endeavouring to get up a revival by means of meetings kept up till midnight, which ended as they usually do, in the deadly sin of fornication. And then one of those who were taking the lead in this wretched, mistaken work—a woman, too, professing godliness—made an excuse for the wickedness which had arisen; that they who sinned, sinned in the flesh only, not in the spirit. “My children,” the Apostle says, in answer to all such wretched subterfuges, “Let no man deceive you. He that doeth righteousness is righteous.”

Now, why does the Holy Apostle speak with such emphasis against such deceivers? Not because they deceive, perhaps, so many; at least perceptibly, but because they deceive

and take in, as it were, the true children of God, St. John's "little children." A true child of God, one who feels the preciousness of his Saviour's work for him, is naturally liable to be taken in by those who appear to honour his Saviour by exalting the need and the completeness of His work on our behalf: but let us ever remember that the true glory of Jesus Christ is the production of the humble, godly, unassuming, prayerful, holy, self-denying, peace-making life of a sincere Christian.

"Even as he is righteous."

This, of course, does not mean that he that doeth righteousness is righteous to the same degree or extent that God is righteous, but it means that his righteousness is of the same kind as that of God. Is the righteousness of God holiness, goodness, truthfulness, loving-kindness, justice, benevolence? So is the Christian's. It must be so if it is wrought in him by the Spirit of God after the example of Christ.

"He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning." This, of course, does not mean that one single act of sin makes a man at once devilish, but it means this, that as all goodness is from God, so all sin is from the enemy of God. The devil first sinned himself, and then he brought sin into the world. Sin is his work, his creation, his kingdom, as it were, and, we may say, his nature; and so when a man commits any sin he joins

in the work of Satan; he does homage to him, he gratifies him, he partakes of and introduces into himself that which is the very nature and life of Satan. He for the time—it may be but for a moment, it may be for an eternity—he for the time loses his hold on Christ and allows the entrance of Satan. He is like one opening a sluice, perhaps a very small one, in a river's bank. It is in appearance very trifling, but, if it is not stopped at once, it gets wider and wider, and the whole land is drowned.

I believe we none of us realise this. We none of us realise how sin—i.e., how deceit, evil lust, malice, envy, and such like—are Satan's work, Satan's power, Satan's very nature and life, so that any sin gives him a hold which he had not before.

You see, my brethren, what a serious state we are all in by having Satan so near to us, and sin within us.

What hope have we then? This hope, this one hope—and a wondrous hope it is if we lay hold on it—that the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. We have God Incarnate on our side. Nay, the Apostle says a greater thing still when he says, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world."

God's only Son came into the world that He might destroy the works of the Devil. He came to destroy the enmity between God and

man because of sin. He came to destroy the alienation of heart which the sinner feels against God, which makes him dislike even to think of God.

He came to disperse the darkness in the sinner's heart, which arises from the indulgence of sin, by saving the sinner from his sin.

He delivers from sin. He delivers the drunkard from his drunkenness, the swearer from his profaneness, the churlish man from his ill-nature, the discontented from his repining, the thief from his dishonesty, the back-biter from his slander and evil speaking: and if there be any other thing which makes man useless, unhappy, discontented, unforgiving, unable to pray, unwilling to think of God, afraid to die, the Son of God Himself was manifested to destroy it.

XXI.

THE POWER OF WEAKNESS.

1 JOHN iii. 8.

“The Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

VERY wonderful are these words to those who consider them carefully. We read them, or we hear them read, and we think that they contain the best known and most widely acknowledged truth of the Bible, for the truth which they contain seems simply to be this, that Christ came to redeem us from sin and death, one of which is the work and the other the power of the devil, and every Christian believes that Jesus came for this, or he is not a Christian even in name.

But, when we come to dwell upon the words of the Apostle as he used them, they strike us with awe, for the Son of God is the Creator of all things, and the devil is but a creature, a fallen creature, and so, with all his power and craft, a wretched, condemned creature; and yet so terrible had been the work of Satan, such havoc had he made in the world which God had made so good, so deeply had he defaced the image of God, that it required the

manifestation of no other than the Son of God to undo the work of the devil in man.

“The manifestation of the Son of God.” His manifestation, that is, at the time and under the circumstances set forth in the Gospels—not of course His manifestation in glory at the last day, for that is yet future, and the Apostle refers to what is past, but His manifestation in Bethlehem, in Nazareth, in Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, on Calvary.

Now one would have thought that the Son of God, being the Almighty Ruler of all, might have destroyed the work of the devil without laying aside His glory and leaving His throne on high. Omnipotence, we should have imagined, need only have said one word, and the devil and all his works would have been as though they had never existed. But we should have been mistaken. Evil is not to be overcome in such a way. Sin is not, it seems by the decree of God Himself, to be cast out and annihilated by mere power. Physical forces of all kinds may be met and counteracted by contrary forces, but sin is a power in another world besides the natural world, and it and its effects cannot be done away with by mere power or force. Magistrates, such as some of you before me, know this well. You know that mere force and strength—the force of bars and bolts and walls, can hardly restrain sin, much less destroy it. It can protect society from

some of its manifestations, but that is all. Some criminal has broken the law, and you punish him, but you cannot even touch that within him which is the root or seed of the crime. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, thefts, false witness;" and no restraint of the outward man can touch the springs of the heart. I do not, of course, deny that in a case here and there it may lead to reflection. The criminal may say, "If the punishment of my fellow man for one crime of mine is so terrible, what will be the punishment of God for all those evil doings of my whole life which man has not known, but which are all known to God:" or the criminal may say to himself, "If this confinement, so that I have no one to converse with, and so am thrown upon my own evil thoughts, if this be so wretched, what will it be to be deserted by God, and to be left to myself, and to those like myself, for all Eternity?"

The criminal, I say, may in a few rare cases say this within himself, and be brought to a better mind; but you will acknowledge, I am sure, that such cases are very few indeed, and you who are Christians will also acknowledge that there has been a something besides the prison and its punishments to affect the heart even so far as this. There has been the germ of grace received long before—there have been, perhaps, long forgotten memories of better

times; there has been the teaching of religion, which, it may be, the criminal has never before been under; and all these, and many other influences which have apparently helped the mere power of the magistrate, belong all to another and a very different sphere.

An illustration such as this, taken from the constitution and course of the world around us, will serve to help us to see that something besides external power must be brought to bear upon such things as sin and its consequences, if they are to be destroyed. And so it was in the great moral or spiritual kingdom of God. The Son of God achieved His conquest over sin and Satan not by power, that is, not by outward physical brute force, but by its very opposite, by weakness. It is the part of power to exalt its possessor. That is why power is coveted; at least it is the part of power to keep its possessor in his state of exaltation; but the Son of God, when manifested to destroy the works of the devil, laid aside both His glory and His power, and by a miracle of condescension became weak. He came into this world with all those signs of weakness which accompany the entrance into this world of any other child of man. If you had been in Bethlehem at the time of His birth you might have seen Him lying in a manger, and so exhibiting not only the weakness of an infant, but also surrounded with the additional humiliations, that is, weaknesses, which attend deep

poverty. And if you had been able to watch His human life from that day to the day of His Crucifixion you would have noticed how completely He identified Himself with weak and suffering humanity. Through weakness He suffered hunger, through weakness He suffered thirst, through weakness He suffered weariness, and sat and rested on the wellside. Through weakness His bodily frame required the restorative power of sleep, and must we not say—though we fear to say it—through weakness He wept.

But some one may say, Look at His miracles. Did ever man before Him show such power? Was it ever so seen in Israel, the land where God was known, and His Name great? Did He not change the very substance of things when He turned the water into wine? Did He not display the very power of the Creator when He multiplied the loaves? Did He not cause the sound of His voice to break the bars of the unseen prison of souls when He shouted, "Lazarus, come forth." Yes: but He did not by these things destroy the power of the devil. The last of these miracles, and the most stupendous, rather called forth the more malignant power of Satan, in that it excited such envy and malice in the Jewish rulers that they consulted how they might put both Him and Lazarus to death.

No, it was by stooping lower still that He

finally conquered sin and death. By becoming weaker still He overcame: as His great servant has expressed it, "He was crucified through weakness." By death, that is, by that through which the last remains of human strength ebb forth—by that which is the exhibition of such weakness that the soul and body have no longer strength to hold together—by this extremity of weakness He destroyed him that had the power of death.

If we were not so familiar with it, how amazing would this truth appear to us! God, in order to destroy sin, took it upon Himself. He took it as closely to Himself as He possibly could without partaking of its guilt. He could not become a sinner, but He suffered Himself to be treated as one. The death by which Christ died was one reserved for the greatest criminals. The shame which attended such a death, as well as the torture under which a crucified person died, marked the death of the cross as fit only for the lowest and the vilest; and this the Son of God, having become man, underwent. The person of the Son of God, by an act of will of which we can form no comprehension, put away from Himself the natural strength and power of His Godhead, and did not permit it to interfere with His weakness and suffering. He became as if He was only weak man, and by an effort divested or emptied Himself of all power, in order that

He might sound the lowest depths of human weakness, and infuse His strength into it for its restoration.

An illustration of the need of such an abasement to effect such a result as the conquest of sin may be taken from the great works of mercy performed by one whose name is the greatest honour of this town—I mean, of course, John Howard.*

Howard could not have worked the reformation in prisons which he did, or for which he prepared the way, unless he had himself personally visited the prisons, spent days and nights in the foul pestilential wards, heard with his own ears the blasphemy and lewdness with which those walls resounded, saw with his own eyes the disastrous effects of crowding together innocent debtors and guilty felons. If he had kept himself at a safe distance from these evils, and only corresponded and remonstrated upon what had come to him by hearing, he would have left no such an honoured name and set on foot no such a godlike work. It was by descending to the depths, by associating with sin and misery that he won the power, the moral power to make his voice heard. Men in high places would listen to one who shamed them by his self-denial and toil and courage about these poor wretches for whom, as the guardians of society, they were responsible.

* Preached in Bedford.

Here, of course, the comparison is at an end. All the power which Howard acquired was to make his voice heard as he pleaded the cruel case of the innocent immured with the guilty, the culprits through mistake or weakness with the utterly hardened and abandoned. Still, humanly speaking, it was because Howard took part so far as he was able in the evils he exposed that he gained this power of doing good.

But the Eternal Son, being a Person in the Godhead, by His humiliation in assuming the nature of the sinner in order that in that nature He might be treated as the vilest of sinners, actually won or purchased power to remedy the evils which He tasted. He won the power and the right to have His sinful brethren (as many that is as would) grafted into Himself, and so made partakers of His righteousness, His virtue, His moral strength ; in fact, His power against evil.

This is the great teaching of this Epistle : The Son of God has come and died and risen again, that we should be in Him for all purposes of salvation from sin and its consequences.

He came and assumed our weak nature, and tasted the extremity of weakness in death, not merely to set us an example of submission to God. Though that were a great thing, still, by itself, even such an example would be useless in

our case, for such is our weakness that we have not power to follow the example of such goodness. Submission to God, true submission to all that God lays upon us, submission to God's law, to God's will, to His dispensations—this submission is a sign of the greatest possible internal and spiritual strength: and this no mere looking at an example will work in us. There must be the communication to one and all of us of the strength of His nature, as a spiritual and supernatural power, to renew us, together with the forgiveness of past sin and the gift of a filial spirit; and this, and all else that pertains to our eternal well-being, we get from abiding union with Christ as the Second Adam. Now, the power of Christ to be to us this Second Adam He had Himself to acquire, and He gained it, not by exerting, as it were, the physical, natural, Almighty power of His Godhead, but by the very contrary, by laying aside His power and glory, by emptying Himself and becoming weak. Wonderful paradox! in weakness was His strength made perfect. He who was the life submitted to death, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death; just as He who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

“The Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil.” After He had sounded the utmost depths in His

Crucifixion He was called to the greatest possible height of exaltation in His Ascension. He then received all power. "All power," He says, "is given to Me in heaven and in earth." Then He began to destroy the works of the devil; but the law of the original conquest was to continue. He began to destroy the works of the devil by His Church, and His Church was not to fight with weapons of carnal strength, but with the very opposite. As He had conquered by means of weakness, so was His Church. His kingdom was most of all extended by one whose enemies said of him that "his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible," one who actually gloried in his infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon him; one who could say in all faith, "when I am weak then am I strong." How did the Church of Christ conquer the world? not by eloquence certainly—not by philosophy—not by education—not by grasping political power—not by courting popularity. It is well for us of the Church to remember this. When the Church is most politically or most socially powerful then she seems most spiritually weak. And when the Church was most under persecution, when she had most to take up the cross, then was she the strongest in deeds of faith and the richest in Saints.

It is well both for her friends and her enemies to remember this. Her friends desire

to prop her up with political power and influence, her enemies desire to strip her naked. If the Scriptures are true, each of them, if they had their desire, would be mistaken in their calculation.

“The Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

It is eighteen hundred years since He was manifested. Eighteen hundred years since He was crucified through weakness that He might destroy the power of sin. Eighteen hundred years since He sent down the Spirit and founded His Church. It is more than eighteen hundred years since all these things were accomplished, and yet the works of the devil are not yet destroyed. Look at the drunkenness of some Christian races, the lying and fraud and deceit which seem inrooted in the national character of others. Look at the immoralities of all Christian lands, Romish and Protestant alike. Look at the luxury of the squares and suburbs of any great city, and the vice, filth, and wretchedness and penury of its courts and alleys. Look at the universal adulteration of what is sold for food. Look, too, at the fact that the Church has lost the fairest portions of the earth. How hard is it now to realise that the whole of the north of Africa, from the Atlas to the Nile, was once Christian. There once flourished the Churches of Cyprian, Augustine, and Athanasius. Its bishopricks alone were, I

believe, above eight hundred. Tracts far larger than all Christian Europe have been overrun and desolated by Mahometan superstition. How comes it that after the Remedy has been so long known its reign is yet so partial, and the disease of human nature is still so deadly?

There can be, I think, but one answer. The Church has not worked according to His working, Who worketh in her mightily. She has not seconded His working. She has not faithfully apprehended that for which she had been apprehended by her Lord. It were treason to Him to assign any other cause for her failures. Christ has done His work, but what He has done has in our degree to be accomplished in each one of us. Had He to humble Himself on behalf of His Church, His Church has to humble herself both for herself and for Him. And the Church is, after all, but an aggregate of individual souls, each of whom must individually humble itself. As Christ died for our sins, so must each soul amongst us abase itself for its own sin in His sight; and if we each one of us have not done so—that is, if we have not undergone that spiritual process so often, so persistently insisted on in the Scriptures under the name of repentance, we have not as yet taken the first step. Now what is this repentance but the soul realising and confessing, and acting upon its utter weakness and unprofitableness; shewing forth before God

and men, not its strength and sufficiency and independence, but its feebleness, its insufficiency, its dependence? Every Sunday evening we sing to the music of the Church words of very deep meaning: "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away." He was the mightiest of the mighty. He put Himself down from His seat in the heaven of heavens, and because of this His surpassing humility and meekness God exalted Him. And all this has to take place in us; and repentance, that is, sorrow for sin and shame at our having lived without God, and a new mind and heart towards God, is the beginning, in almost every soul, of that work of God in it by which Satan's reign is destroyed.

"The Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil." What are the works of the devil in each of us?—Enmity to God and alienation from Him; and this Christ came to cast out of us, so that we should be the friends, nay, rather the loving children, of God Himself.

Selfishness is a work of Satan, and the Son of God came that He might destroy this by opening our hearts to one another, as His heart was opened towards us. Impurity in all its forms is a work of the devil; and St. John writes that every man that hath this hope in him, the

hope, that is, of seeing Christ for ever, purifieth Himself even as He is pure.

Malice, envy, ill-will, slander, party spirit, factiousness, all these are works of the devil; and the Son of God came to cast them out of us. Shall we cherish within us the evil things which the Son of God Himself came to destroy?

And as we must not for Christ's sake suffer these evil things within us, so neither must we acquiesce in their existing around us: we must not be content to see them in our neighbours, in our brethren, in the church, in the world.

Let us by our prayers, by our example, by our influence, by our good conversation, fight determinedly against them and all other evil things; and so, and only so, shall we be assured that we are on the side of Christ.

XXII.

HOSPITALS AND INFIRMARIES.

ACTS iii. 6.

“Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”

LET us, in thought, transport ourselves back to the time when these words were spoken. We should be within the precincts of a magnificent temple, of which the foundations, or rather substructions only, remain to this day; but these are on such a scale of vastness as to strike the beholder with amazement. Only within the last few months have discoveries been made among the *débris* and rubbish which surround the base of the elevation on which this temple stood, which prove to us that the walls of the platform or terrace on which it was erected were above one hundred and fifty feet high, and according to all accounts which have come down to us the superstructure must have been worthy of such foundations. But the vastness of this fane and the magnificence of its decorations were as nothing when put in comparison with the associations connected with it; for this very temple had been for above one thou-

sand years the only spot in the whole world where the Maker and Ruler of that world had engaged to meet and answer the prayers of the worshippers who came in His own appointed way, which was by burnt-offerings and sacrifices. We do not say that God did not answer the prayers of the heathen when, "feeling after Him," they vaguely addressed themselves to the Great Unknown One Whom nature herself preached to them, but He had only pledged Himself to hear the prayers and accept the sacrifices which were offered up to Him in this place. We who call upon God everywhere can scarcely form a notion of worship so local and circumscribed. It is as if the Eucharist could only be celebrated for all Christian England in one single cathedral.

But in this temple strange things had of late been heard and seen.

One Who had no worldly influence, without wealth, without rank, almost without friends, had predicted, as He was sitting on a hill over against this mighty building, that within a short space not one stone of it should be left upon another.

Well, any fanatic might have done this, but He Who thus prophesied had done more than prophesy. He had done mighty works such as Moses or Samuel, Elijah or Elisha, had never done. He had raised to life one who had been four days dead. He had entered into this temple,

and had bid the lame and the blind to come to Him and be healed. Besides this, such was the majesty of His appearance when He suffered His Divinity to shine through the veil of His Flesh, or such the secret power which He wielded over the souls of men, that with a scourge of small cords He had driven out a crowd who had profaned this holy place by making it a place of merchandise. Besides this, He had denounced, in words which cut them to the quick, the hypocrisy and venality of those who were the leaders of that religion which had its home and centre in this very building; its walls had rung with the fearful sound of the woes He had pronounced upon them.

His enemies seemed at one time to have utterly crushed Him; but at the very moment of their triumph, when He was yielding up His life to their violence, this very temple was the scene of a supernatural occurrence, betokening more than all else the passing away of these exclusive rights and privileges shadowed out in its very form and structure—a large veil of incredible thickness of texture, which hung loose so as to screen the very holiest part from the gaze of the worshippers, was rent as by angel hands. Three days after this a strange rumour had run through the Holy City that this Man, Whose cruel execution and death had been seen by all, had burst the bonds of death.

Fifty days more, and as the twelve followers of this Jesus of Nazareth were gathered together, most probably in a court or chamber of this temple, there was a mighty and mysterious sound as of a Spirit descending, and each one of these unlettered Galileans seemed crowned as with fire, and in one moment the ancient curse was reversed, for they all spake in all the tongues of the known world the wonderful works of God.

And now one would have thought, seeing that these men had a commission to preach a more excellent way of access to God than any which this temple afforded, and infinitely nobler Blood to put away sin than that which was poured forth in expiation at the foot of its altar, that henceforth its courts would have been deserted by those who believed that its sacrifices were fulfilled in the sacrifice of Jesus; but it was not so. So far from this, they on whom such a flood of the Holy Ghost had descended "continued daily with one accord in the temple." Though its worship was growing more and more obsolete, this was to them no reason why that which God Himself had ordained should be neglected; and they attended its courts till He Himself rendered all worship therein impossible by the destruction of the temple itself: thereby setting us an example that if it is in our power we should frequent the courts of God's house daily; for we are

behind the very Jews if we attend our spiritual service but once a week, whilst they offered up their more carnal worship on every day of the week.

Shortly after this the two leading ministers of the faith of Jesus were going up to the temple service at the accustomed hour of prayer, when a lame man, who was laid daily at the Beautiful gate of the temple, asked alms of them. They were poor men themselves; they had long ere this parted with all their property, they had nothing of their own to give, for they were maintained from day to day on the free-will offerings of those who believed in the Jesus Whom they preached. In answer to his application they stopped, they fixed their eyes upon him, and bid him also look upon them. Why they did this we are not told. It may be they desired to read the spirit of the man, whether the healing would be thrown away upon him or not. It was not, as we know that he entered with them into the temple "walking and leaping and praising God;" and we learn from the next chapter that he continued by their side whilst they were suffering persecution at the hands of the rulers: or it may be that they simply desired that the man himself and the bystanders should connect the healing with themselves, and through them with Him in Whose Name they had performed it. To this end the man's attention must be fixed upon

them, otherwise the source of healing might have remained unknown or been disputed.

Then whilst the man was looking, expecting perhaps to receive some paltry dole, the words proceed from Peter's lips, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

And the invocation of the All Holy Name was with power, for "Peter took him by the right hand and lifted him up; and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength: and he leaping up stood and walked, and entered with them into the temple walking and leaping and praising God."

All that is external in this narrative has long passed away. The temple, the scene of this exercise of power, has perished utterly. Men know that certain mighty walls are the foundations of its terrace, but that is all; not perhaps quite all, for hollowed out of the live rock, beneath where the temple once stood, are the spacious drains through which the water mingled with blood, the blood of countless burnt-offerings, escaped from the trench round the altar into the gully of the Kedron, far beneath. Then the Apostles have long passed away; and though in a sense they may be said to live in their successors, yet how changed the circumstances. Those who rule the Church now can hardly say, Silver and gold have I none. The estates

with which the piety of our ancestors, reaching back into early Saxon times, have endowed our bishoprics would be an absolute scandal if it were not for this, that custom obliges the holders of those positions, though they have only a life interest in their incomes, to give on a scale of liberality far beyond what is expected of a nobleman of equal or indeed much greater means; so that, as one of their number has said, No matter what income a bishop receives, great or small, the public will receive the vast bulk of it back from him more directly than from any other holder of wealth.

They, then, who represent the Apostles, cannot now say, "Silver and gold have I none;" though their bitterest enemies will allow that what they have they bestow abundantly.

Neither can they say, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

The power of working miracles ceased apparently almost with the lives of the Apostles themselves. It was not given to the Church, in the first instance, for the relief of the afflicted. It was rather given as the seal of the truth of the Apostolic preaching. How could the teaching of unlearned, and so far as this world's philosophy was concerned, ignorant men, who proclaimed a direct message from God respecting salvation by the Name and Blood of One crucified as an evil doer, which Man was raised from the dead and set on the right hand

of God, with all things visible and invisible under His feet—how, I ask, would the world of that day have listened for a moment to men saying such things, if those who asserted them had not possessed some especial credentials, which none could mistake or gainsay, that they were speaking in the name of the unseen Lord of all?

And such credentials they had. They could restore sight to the blind; they could heal diseases; they could even raise the bodies of the dead by the invocation of the Name of Jesus: and men, seeing what they could do in the way of the supernatural healing of the body, were the more inclined to listen to them when they bid them seek through the Name of this same Jesus the supernatural healing of the soul.

But all this was but for a time. It would not have been well for it to have continued when the ear of the world was caught, and when the Church was firmly rooted; then the faith was left to go on of itself, fostered by those ordinary influences of God's Spirit which are common to all ages.

So that, as the temple in which this scene took place has passed away, so has the primitive Apostolic poverty and the primitive Apostolic power of healing in a moment crippled limbs.

And another feature of this scene happily no longer exists.

Conceive, my brethren, our coming to church this Sunday, and having to make our way to these sacred walls through rows of deformed and ghastly objects laid by the church doors in order to attract our compassion—our compassion not in the shape of permanent relief, but in the shape of a daily dole of alms. This, happily, has passed away, to be succeeded by something better, and that better thing the fruit of the religion which St. Peter taught, the result of the Almighty power of that “Name which is above every name,” which St. Peter invoked over this poor cripple to restore to him the use of his limbs. For the Lord Jesus, Who went about doing good to the bodies as well as to the souls of men, has so impressed His character of compassionate love upon His mystical Body that the Church has ever considered it her duty to join together the needs of the body and the needs of the soul. Her motto in this is yet the words of the Apostle, “Such as I have give I thee.”

The Church, or rather, I should say, Christian society, has this world's wealth. The Christian community is as little Apostolic in its poverty as the Christian episcopate. The most flourishing communities on the face of the earth are avowedly Christian nations. Whether for good or for evil, God has given to the great national families of Christendom, especially to that great Anglo-Saxon family to which we belong, the

power to accumulate wealth. Taking, then, the poor man sitting at the Beautiful gate as the type or representation of the sick, the maimed, the diseased of all times and ages, the Church, or rather Christian society, gives him of her "silver and gold," but not in the shape of a dole of alms; that is, a few pence, or perhaps a shilling flung to him as he lies at the door of the sanctuary. No; she relieves him of the temptation of exhibiting his sores and his deformities. She builds a spacious house, or rather a palace, with every appliance for affording to its inmates pure air, pure water, warmth and quiet, stored with everything that can alleviate pain. She invites him in there, so that, whilst sick and weak, he may not have to contend with distress in the very stronghold of the disease itself; for what fosters disease so effectually as ill-ventilated, unwholesome, crowded, unquiet homes, perhaps in some court or alley where the drains diffuse miasma all around?

In providing this place for the diseased, she rescues them from the fearful moral temptation of making a trade of their affliction. If men are allowed to exhibit their sores in the highway to the passers-by, we may be quite sure that in very many cases those sores will never be healed. They are too profitable, and they will encourage others to counterfeit diseases which they have not; so that in places where they

suffer or connive at these public exhibitions of distress, if you follow your Christian instincts and give relief, you are almost certain to do mischief, because, instead of relieving real honest distress, you are aiding and encouraging imposture.

The Christian Church, then, under the inspiration of her founder, and taught by experience, builds her hospitals like palaces, so that her diseased and destitute children may be taken out of the streets, and lodged and nursed, and fed with food best adapted to further their recovery.

All this the Church does by her "silver and gold" which she now has, and which she spends in this way of doing good, a way as unmixed with evil as any in this fallen world.

But still further does the Church act on the Apostolic precept, "Such as I have give I thee."

If we compare this age of the Church with that in which the Apostles lived, in nothing is the difference more remarkable than in the vast treasures of accurate scientific knowledge, especially of that which bears on the prevention and remedy of disease, which are now at the disposal of the Christian community, and which are given freely to those afflicted ones who are in the same class as the cripple once laid at the gate of the temple. Scientific research has now discovered medicinal remedies

and all manner of appliances for relieving pain, and making existence bearable, which in the times of the New Testament kings could not command. Think of the progress of late years in medical science and its kindred sciences, such as Physiology, Chemistry, Electricity. Think of the effect upon the art of healing of such discoveries as the circulation of the blood, vaccination, and the virtues of Peruvian bark. Think of the painlessness of the operations for the amputation of limbs now, compared to what they were before the invention and application of chloroform. And all these are at the disposal of Christian society in order that they may be applied not to the relief of the wealthy or noble only, but of those who, having nothing, are forced to accept the aid of the charitable, and seek refuge and the application of medical and surgical skill in our hospitals and infirmaries.

The hospitals for the relief of the poor and destitute sick are under the superintendence of those who are alive to all the latest discoveries in medical science, and the incomes of these charitable foundations enable them to give the benefits of their scientific discoveries freely to the poorest. So that the Church can say, with respect to these great gifts of God, "Such as I have give I thee."

You are asked to give of your alms this day to the Bedford infirmary.

It is, as you well know, under the control

and government of the principal persons in your county and town, and not only is it nominally under their control, but by the constancy of their attendance at its periodical meetings such persons show that they take a lively interest in the beneficent work which is going on in it.

In addition to this, the first medical practitioners in the town give their attendance and advice on certain days. I would earnestly ask you to remember this: If they give their time, which is their money, and the results of their education and experience, which is their means of livelihood, ought not we to deny ourselves in some corresponding way, so that we too may say to Christ's poor, "Such as I have give I thee?"

"Such as I have give I thee." These are the words of St. Peter; but, my brethren, can we hear them without recognising the voice of St. Peter's Master and our Master saying, "Such as I had gave I thee; such as I have give I thee."

Methinks we hear Jesus saying, "I gave thee My Godhead, for so far as it was possible I laid it aside. I emptied Myself of its glory so as to become like unto thee. I Who was rich in the ownership of all things, for thy sake become poor, that thou through My poverty mightest be made rich.

"Such as I had gave I thee." I gave thee My time, for when I came into thy world I spent it all in doing good to thy race.

“I gave thee My reputation, My good name, for I consented to be accounted and to be treated as a sinner, in order to redeem thee from sin.

“I gave thee My life, for I laid it down for thee, sheep of My flock.

“I gave thee My Blood, for I shed it in very great agony for the remission of thy sins.

“I give thee now My Spirit, so that He may guide thee into all truth, and enable thee to bear the fruits of all goodness and righteousness and truth.

“I give thee My Body and My Blood, so that I may dwell in thee and thou in Me.

“Such as I have had, and such as I have, give I thee.

“And as I have given to thee all this, so I ask thee to give something to Me, something to Me for the building up of My Church, for the spread of My Gospel, for the enlargement of My Kingdom, and for the relief of My poor. Not that thy gifts are profitable to Me, but they are profitable to thee.

“And I tell thee that what thou givest to My poor thou lendest to Me thy Lord; and when I come again, and I will surely come again, I will account what thou hast done to them as if it had been done to Me.”

XXIII.

APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION.

(Preached at a clerical meeting.)

ACTS xiii. 2.

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said; Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

I HAVE chosen this passage, not so much because St. Barnabas is mentioned in it as along with St. Paul set apart for the work of an Apostle, but because it seems calculated to suggest reflections which, by God's blessing, may be profitable to us when, shortly after this, we shall be called upon to take up and consider the subject chosen for this day's discussion, namely, the Call of the Apostles.

Before, however, considering the call of the Apostles, let us glance for a moment at their position. There can be, as far as I can see, but one opinion respecting this. It is a position betwixt Christ and His ordinary followers. Supposing that we take Christ's own illustration of what His Church is; that it is a Vine of which He is the Stem, then the Apostles, whom He distinctly called the branches (John xv. 5), must be the principal branches, that is, those branches which divide from the

trunk as soon as it begins to throw out branches, and through which the smallest twig or tendril derives sap or nourishment from the trunk.

I will give two or three collateral proofs that this was the intention and meaning of Christ. No miracle is so prominent in the Gospel narrative as the "feeding of the five thousand, and the sister miracle of the "feeding of the four thousand." Now in the accounts of both these it is *in every case* especially noticed that the Saviour distributed to the multitude through the hands of the Apostles or disciples. "He gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude."* Again, when the fact is recorded that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, it is afterwards significantly said, that "Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples." Again, with reference to teaching, it is remarked that "Jesus spake to the multitudes in parables, and without a parable spake He not unto them, and when they were alone He expounded all things to His disciples; "and this, of course, for the sake of the Church in after times; for Christ expressly says, with reference to this secret teaching, "What I tell you in darkness that speak ye in light" (Matt. x. 27).

Again, with respect to their whole ministerial power, and its exercise in absolution, it was

* Matt. xiv. 19; xv. 36. Mark vi. 41; viii. 6. Luke ix. 16. John vi. 11.

not to the whole Church gathered together, but to the ten, that Jesus said, "As my Father sent Me, so send I you." "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained." Again, with respect to their commission to administer the Sacraments, the Scriptures teach us that the Apostles alone were present when the Saviour took bread, and blessed, and brake, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body. Do this in remembrance of Me." And it was to the eleven alone that the Saviour said, "Go ye to all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," or "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them." *

Again, in the Book of the Acts (i. 2) it is especially noticed that He gave "commandments unto the Apostles whom He had chosen;" and again, St. Peter, with evident reference to the Apostolate, speaks of God showing Jesus openly, not to all the people, but to "witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him, after He rose from the dead." So that by all His acts with reference to them, both before and after His Resurrection, the Saviour appears to emphasize as strongly as possible the position which He assigned to His Apostles as the principal branches of the vine of His Church, as the first vertebræ of the column of life through which

* Matt. xxviii. 16—19; Mark xvi. 14.

all the nervous force flows from the Divine Head to the Body.

For some time there appears to have been no other ministry in the Church. At least, till the ordination of those called the Seven Deacons, we read of no other. The almost separate position of the Apostles is indicated by the assertion of St. Luke: "Of the rest durst no man join himself unto them, but the people magnified them" (Acts v. 18). All this appears equally plainly put in the writings of St. Paul. This Apostle always asserts the fulness of his Apostolic commission; his equality with the twelve, and that along with them he was an original branch, as it were, having its beginning not in another branch, but in the Stem itself.

We have in one, at least, of his Epistles the clearest enunciation to be found anywhere throughout the compass of God's Word of the principle or theory, so to speak, of ecclesiastical organisation, when he speaks of "The Head, from which the whole body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God" (Coloss. ii. 19).

Did the Apostolic ministry then cease with the death of the last surviving Apostle? It is impossible to suppose that such was the intention of God. Even supposing that there were special circumstances connected with the call of the original twelve as well as that of

St. Paul, as, for instance, that they had seen the Lord; that they had companied with Christ from the first, that they had visible evidence of the truth of His Resurrection, that they had the power of conferring miraculous gifts, and that they had plenary inspiration to make known Christian doctrine, or to decide controversies; supposing, I say, that there were these specialities connected with the life and ministry of the Apostles, does all this oblige us to consider that the Apostolic fellowship, in those its features which can be retained, as, for instance, its governmental, ordaining, and transmitting powers, is not now existing, and has passed away?

Now our Lord's words, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," seem to imply the permanency of the office of those to whom they were addressed. It seems required by the necessities of the case that they should be addressed to persons who had in them the spiritual seed of a ministry, which in due time was to be derived from their own.

But two or three considerations seem to make it imperative so to understand these words of Christ. 1. God has given to the Christian Church the New Testament for its special guidance. Now during the whole of the period embraced by the New Testament history, the original Apostolic ministry was in existence. Almost on the first page of the

New Testament we have its institution by our blessed Lord, and in its latest books (latest both in the order of their publication and of our present arrangement as to sequence) we have this ministry continuing as the ruling and ordaining ministry of the Church. So that the one authoritative and divinely inspired book of the dispensation is full of the call, works, or functions of this particular ministry.

Again, another fact seems to point out the perpetuity of the Apostolic commission and fellowship, which is this, that our present dispensation has no specified time allotted to it for its continuance. It exists, if I may use the word, on sufferance. It may come at any moment to an abrupt termination by the second coming of the Son of Man. At the disappearance of the Lord at His Ascension two angels prophesied of His return to the Apostles themselves, as if it were more than likely that they themselves should be alive, and remain till He came back.

The Apostles expected the return of their Master in their own times, before they themselves should be called away by death, and as far as man can know, there is no moment of time between the departure of Christ and His actual return on which He might not have returned, or may not return. So that, if the New Testament is to be our guide in matters of Church order, and the functions of the ministry, it seems impossible to assign any period or ter-

mination to the duration of the Apostolic fellowship and ministry, because the very Church, of which it was the sole original ministry, has no period or term of duration, that we know of, assigned to it.

And now we come to the call or appointment of this ministry. This call was the special personal designation by Christ Himself of the original and only actual Apostles. "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Whether Jesus used at the first any outward sign in constituting them Apostles, we are not told. With reference to the twelve, His words, as given by St. Mark, are, "He calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him. And He ordained (*ἐποίησε*) twelve, that they should be with Him." Perhaps if there was any outward sign it was when their original appointment was confirmed or renewed, when He breathed on them, and said unto them, "As my Father sent Me, so send I you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

In the case of the Apostle of the Gentiles we have his original designation in our Lord's words to Ananias, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles and Kings and the children of Israel." We have the declaration of this to St. Paul by the Lord Himself, in the words, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou

hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee. Delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee." And we have the final ordination by imposition of hands by a very express and personal direction of the Spirit, which is unique in the sacred volume, in the words of my text: "The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them."

We may notice, in passing, that the Saviour on more than one occasion asserts this choosing of the Apostles as His work. "Have not I chosen you twelve? Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained (*εθηκα*) you, that ye should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." Again, with reference to St. Paul, "He is a chosen vessel unto me." And this latter Apostle is careful to draw attention to the choice of himself by Christ. "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an Apostle. . . By Whom (i.e., by Jesus Christ) we have received grace and Apostleship" (Rom. i. 1—4). Again, "Paul an Apostle (not of men, neither by man) but by Jesus Christ and God the Father" (Eccl. i. 1).

I have directed particular attention to this personal designation of the Apostles on the part of Christ in order to impress upon you that this choosing of the Apostles—that is, of the first Christian ministers; in fact, of

the fountains, so to speak, of the Christian ministry—was in the eyes of Christ a matter of primary importance; and, also, that in this whole matter the Saviour asserts a kingdom and power not of this world. In this world, but not of it. In this world, because the officers of Christ's kingdom are in flesh and blood, and destined, too, to subdue the world in the sense of producing the greatest moral, social, and political changes in it; but still not of it; for our Lord was not a temporal sovereign, nor did He commit the choosing of His Apostles to a temporal sovereign, so that the Christian ministry is in no sense derived from any power of this world, though the powers of this world may, and I think not unlawfully, impose certain conditions on its exercise.* And, on the other hand, there was nothing approaching to popular election in the designation of the original Apostles or of St. Paul; and in the choosing of Matthias the matter was left to the decision of Christ, that He should order the lot.

* For this we have the analogy of the Jewish dispensation. The original appointment of the Jewish priesthood was as directly from God as that of the Christian; and yet, in after times, the kings of Judah, i.e., the believing temporal power, regulated, and even controlled, the Levitical ministry. I do not merely refer to the regulations made by David, who may be said to have acted by direct inspiration (1 Chron. xvi. 1—6, xxiii. 6) or by Solomon, who was a prophet-king (2 Chron. viii. 14—15); but by kings who had no pretension to their direct inspiration, as Joash (2 Kings xii. 7), Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxix. 5, 11, 25, 27), and Josiah (2 Chron. xxxv. 3—5).

In the case of St. Paul, the Apostle of liberty as he has been called, there was nothing approaching to popular choice permitted by God either in the matter of his first designation to Apostleship or of his after ordination.

As it came thus from the hands of its Founder, the Kingdom or Church of Christ was a spiritual imperium, necessarily existing in the temporal imperium. In a certain sense too at the mercy of the temporal power, forbidden certainly to contend with the temporal power with carnal weapons, but yet not necessarily opposed to the civil authority, because both are ordained by God.

It is clear that the working out of such a problem in a world like this must give rise to amazing difficulties. Immense complications must arise when, as has been the case all over the world, especially in Western Europe, the spiritual imperium does not know or keep its proper place, but intrudes itself into the domain of mere worldly politics, allies itself with parties, or amasses property, or interferes with liberty, or claims exempt spiritual or even temporal jurisdiction for its officers or members. Still greater complications must arise when the temporal imperium is Christian, and even takes a more Christian view of its obligations than the spiritual does. Still greater complications must arise when the spiritual power in any state or number of states becomes corrupt, not

perhaps so corrupt as to destroy its vitality, but still so unlike its original state as to grudge or deny its members the free use of the one book which contains the account of its original state.

Now in this nineteenth century, in Christian England, we are living in the midst of all these complications! What are we to do? Is there any plain intimation of God's will? Can we see daylight at the end of any of the tangled paths of this dark labyrinth?

One or two considerations may be of use to us—to us, that is, of the Church of England—in our attempt to ascertain the mind and will of God. In the first place, if we are to take the New Testament as written for the guidance of all ages of the Church, there must ever exist an Apostolic *κοινωνία* or fellowship—a fellowship not of the one Spirit only, but of the one body, that is, the one visible form and organisation, for the very idea of “body” implies visible shape or form, and a separate organisation. With this agrees the extraordinary earnestness with which the Apostles deprecate divisions, as if separation and parties and schism were actual sin, and the frequency with which they enforce unity, as if it were not only possible but incumbent upon Christians to maintain unity.* All this seems to require that there must be some fellowship or organisation by adhering to which we preserve this unity of the body—that

* 1 Cor. i. 11—13; iii. 3—7; Gal. v. 20; Ephes. iv. 4—17.

is, the outward visible unity inherent in one organisation or body.

Again, if there be such a thing as Apostolic authority, such an authority can hardly be the authority of the civil governor, even though that governor be Christian ; neither can it be the mere will of the people or congregation on the other hand, though, too, that people or congregation be Christian. Such Apostolic authority must be in its form and manifestations also Episcopal, for assuredly the Apostles acted episcopally in the exercise of their authority. St. Paul, for instance, never for a moment recognises any authority in the people, or presbyters of any Church, which can set aside his injunctions. And when they were leaving the scene the Apostles seem always to have transmitted those functions of their office which were capable of transmission to *persons*, and not to associations, or synods, or assemblies.

The Apostolic fellowship must maintain also, I think, a principle of outward and visible as well as of inward continuity. It is implied in such a promise as, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," or, "if I will that he tarry till I come." At least, we must look for as much outward and visible continuity as the Church of the old dispensation presents us with during the fifteen hundred years of its existence : which outward and visible continuity, be it remembered, was re-

cognized and practically enforced by Christ Himself, where He says to His disciples, "The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat : all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do " (Matt. xxiii. 2, 3).

I think from these considerations that there is now the Apostolic fellowship in the world ; and I think that we have every reason, certainly every historical reason, to believe that we have it, and are continuing in it.

But now we must turn to another side of the great question, which is, the difficulties in commending this Apostolic fellowship to our countrymen. Look at the enormous difficulties in the way of any *bonâ fide* reception by an ordinary Englishman of a doctrine closely associated, as he thinks, with the claims of Roman Catholicism—claims always opposed to civil and religious liberty ; claims, too, enforced by such means as the Massacre of St. Bartholomew and the Inquisition, and erecting into articles of faith Papal Infallibility and the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. Look at the difficulties which stand in the way of the ordinary type of Englishman acknowledging our claim to it ; difficulties, in the first place, arising from our own divisions respecting it : there are men of high office amongst us, men, too, of considerable note as expositors of Scripture, who do not scruple to apply the term figment to it ; difficulties arising from the fact

that to realise the force of the evidence for the proof of our claim to it, we must have some notion of the method of establishing historical proof or probability. I need not say how few possess this.

Above all, look at the enormous difficulty in the way of a poor and partially-educated, but religious, Englishman receiving a doctrine which is usually so barely and unguardedly stated as to call upon him to acknowledge that the man under whom he has slumbered for years without receiving one religious idea from his teaching is a successor of the Apostles—and the man who has first taught him that he has a soul to be saved, a Saviour to trust to, and a Spirit to help him, is an interloper; a thief climbing up into Christ's vineyard some other way.

How can such a man realise that that is an Apostolical system which, with all its orthodoxy, all its primitive order, all its theoretical parochial oversight and organisation, has left him to himself without a house of God in which he could claim the humblest place,* and that

* All this, as is well known, was terribly true of large parts of the metropolis and of our large manufacturing centres forty or fifty years ago. That this state of things lingers yet in some places, the reports of the Pastoral Aid and Additional Curates Societies testify. Let the reader too remember, that however things may be altered for the better now, this does not undo the past. The seeds of division, which we now lament, were sown then and are bearing fruit now.

the system which, with all its heterodoxy and pretentiousness and vulgarity, has yet aroused in him the feeling of love to God and trust in Christ, is utterly apart from God ?

The Apostolical succession and its consequent fellowship is one thing, and our power of commending it to men's acceptance is another. I believe that we of the Church of England have this succession, and partake of this ministry, and that we can use it for our own advancement in everything that can make our ministry to prosper ; but I believe that it is the most difficult weapon possible to use in controversial warfare with those who, mainly through our own shortcomings, have separated from us.

One principal use which we can make of the consideration that we have the Apostolical fellowship, is to humble ourselves in the sight of God. It is certainly not a thing that we can boast of for a moment ; for consider, to what did God call those Apostles from whom our ministry is derived. The Man of Sorrows says to them, "Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with." "Ye shall be hated by all men for My name's sake." "I will show him what great things he must suffer for My name's sake." Consider the first act recorded of the man whose name we celebrate to-day. "And Joses, who is surnamed Barnabas by the Apostles, which is, being interpreted, the son of conso-

lation, a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the price, and laid it at the Apostle's feet."

Consider, too, the labours and sufferings and privations which St. Paul had been called to endure when he had scarcely fulfilled half his ministry, as they are written in the Epistle for Sexagesima Sunday: "Are they ministers of Christ? I am more: in labours more abundant; in stripes above measure; in prisons more frequent; in deaths oft. . . in journeying often; in perils of robbers; in perils by mine own countrymen; in perils by the heathen; in perils in the city; in perils in the wilderness; in perils in the sea; in perils among false brethren."

Let it not for a moment be supposed that I imply in all this that our possessing, or abiding in, the Apostolic ministry or fellowship depends upon our partaking with the Apostles in their lives of self-denial and suffering. I am not speaking of the validity of our ministerial acts or the authority of our commission, but upon our power of commending to others our ministry as Apostolic in its origin, and enforcing its acknowledgment from those who gainsay it. I am speaking of our ability to set it forth as a centre of unity, and I cannot but say that the contrast between the intense worldliness and spiritual dryness of what our ministry was sixty years ago, if universal tradition be true, and the utter unworldliness and spiritual power of

the Apostolic ministry as it appears in the New Testament, must in the eyes of the unlearned in theology and ecclesiastical history form the most serious impediment to the acknowledgment of the best founded claims to be the depository of the fellowship of the Apostles.

We may lament that men are so illogical as to insist upon identity of ministerial character and likeness in ministerial labours before they will entertain the idea of succession of authority ; but so it is, and we cannot help it.

Well, then, does it seem very unsatisfactory to say that the consciousness that we have the Apostolic commission should be made use of by us rather to help us to humble ourselves than to exalt ourselves ?

It will not seem so unsatisfactory to those who remember how Christ thrice emphatically pronounces, "He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Neither will it seem so unsatisfactory to those who remember how Christ's servant said, "When I am weak, then am I strong. Most gladly, then, will I glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

But if God has ordained this perpetual Apostolic ministry and fellowship, must we not assert it, for the sake of those who reject it, seeing that if they reject what God has established they must suffer loss ?

Perhaps we must; but we must assert it, remembering that our own assertion of what tells on our side, so as to increase in the eyes of most men our own personal importance, will be received very reluctantly unless we can show that we are also asserting what entails upon us self-denial, and the constant daily taking up of the cross.

We must assert it, remembering that the Judge, Whom we undoubtedly hope and trust will make allowance in our own case for our shortcomings in following in the footsteps of the Apostles, will also make allowances for the ignorance of those who have little historical knowledge, and feeble powers of reasoning, in a matter respecting which the presumption in its favour depends upon some knowledge of Church history, combined with certain New Testament teachings, which are not obvious to the common run of readers, though to the careful student they afford ever increasing evidence of its truth. We must assert it, too, remembering that there may be a present application of such words as "Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is on our side;" and of such words as "Every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

XXIV.

CHURCH PRINCIPLES AND CHURCH
RESTORATION.

ISAIAH lviii. 12.

“And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.”

THESE words were written to encourage the feeble band of exiles on their return from Babylon, the city of their captivity, to rebuild the holy and beautiful house in which their fathers had worshipped God, and to re-erect the walls and bulwarks of Zion.

The encouragement is in the form of a prophecy, and was laid up in store for them, in the word of their God, long before it was actually wanted. Not only once, but twice, is this encouragement reiterated, for a little further on we read: “They shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations” (ch. lxi. 4).

This double prophetic encouragement is very remarkable. It is a prophecy that the poor and forlorn remnant should actually ac-

comply with that which it was their duty and privilege to set about. And what encouragement could be greater? You know how you are braced up to exert yourself when some one in whom you trust says to you, "I know that you will succeed in that which you are undertaking."

Nothing could be more discouraging than the beginning of the restoration on their return from captivity. "Without were fightings, within were fears." Without were Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and their Samaritan and heathen auxiliaries, on the watch to hinder the work of the rebuilding of the temple; and, at a later date, Sanballat and Tobiah, when they would rebuild the walls. "Within were fears." Misgivings that God was not with them, as He had been with their fathers in the days of old. There were no overwhelming tokens of His Presence—no miracles, no plagues on their oppressors, no dividing of the Red Sea as of old, no showers of manna, no water from the rock of flint. The restoration, both of temple and of city, seemed to depend not so much on the expressed will and assistance of God as upon the breath of an heathen king.

How precious, then, must have been the encouragement that "they that were of them should build the old wastes, the desolations of many generations!" To know that what they longed and prayed to do, *that* they should do; that

such was written of them in the book of Him Who knew the end from the beginning; that they were predestined by God to fulfil His purposes in the matter of the rebuilding of His sanctuary and of His city. Oh, what like this could have kindled their zeal, and strengthened their hands to work, and opened their hearts to give! Nothing, as this, could have assured them that they were not labouring in vain, or spending their strength for nought.

My friends, if there be one thing which God by the mouth of His Apostles, teaches us with certainty, it is this—that these Jews were, in all stages of their history, types of us Christians. We know, by the express words of the Holy Ghost, that their passage through the Red Sea was a type of our Baptism, and that their partaking of the manna was a type of our sustentation by the true Bread from heaven. We know, on the word of an Apostle, that what God said of Abraham when He counted his faith to him for righteousness, was said, not for his sake, but for ours, in the momentous matter of our acceptance with God by faith. We appropriate the psalms of these Israelites to ourselves as if they had been written for our use, which they were. When we read in the Prophets of Zion, or Jerusalem, and its future glories, we put all down to the account of the Church of Christ, and even the restoration of the temple, after its long desolation, we hold to be typical of the

times of the Gospel, on the strength of the Apostle St. James' application of it: "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up."

I think that those amongst us to whom God has given eyes to see and hearts to apprehend what is passing, cannot but, at times at least, regard this place of Scripture, from which I am now preaching, as written for the present generation of English Churchmen. For the present century of the English Church has been, through the grace of Almighty God, emphatically a century of restoration.

Whether we look to the outward structure of our houses of God, or whether we look to the truth preached in them, or to the forms of devotion in which that truth is embodied, or to the manner in which we offer up to God our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving: at whichever of these we look we shall find that the words of the prophet describe the work of English Christians in our own day when they speak of some that are of God's people, in a future day, "building up the old wastes, and raising up the foundations of many generations."

I shall consider, first of all, the restoration of God's truth.

I take it as a great token for good that the work of restoration which dates, in our Church, from a little before the commencement of the

present century, was a revival of spiritual truth rather than of material beauty in architecture, or outward pomp or splendour in the accessories of Divine worship. What is the most sumptuous fane, or the most primitive, and, we may even add, fervent form of devotion, or the most tasteful decoration, if the man who is supposed to worship be himself yet alienated from God, and unreconciled to Him, and unable to hold converse with Him?

Now the restoration of doctrinal truth which, as I said, in our Church dates from the last years of the last century, was a revival of that part of religion which has especially to do with the restoration of each individual soul to the favour and the image of God. It was a restoration of the truth that there is One Mediator and One Sanctifier, and that each soul must itself come to God through the Mediator and be renewed in spirit through the Sanctifier. It pressed upon each soul that each must of itself come to God, looking to Jesus, and must be found in its Saviour and must be washed in His Blood, and plead for itself His merits, and be renewed in His Image by His Spirit. It was a revival of the truth that each soul must have within itself the Life of God, and must live by that Life. If the whole work of restoration was to be healthy, to be according to the eternal fitness of things, and to be, above all, according to the mind of the Spirit, this must be its first

phase ; otherwise the revival would be a mere palliation of external symptoms, a washing of the mere outside of the vessels of the Spiritual Temple.

But though undoubtedly the first thing, this foremost of all truths, that each soul must accept for itself the salvation of God, must not be taught alone. If the good and holy men who were instrumental in bringing about this revival rested, as there is too much reason to fear that they did, on the idea that it was sufficient, the Holy Spirit must have been grieved, because the entrance of further light into the soul was resisted. For though God saves us thus, one by one, so that we must each one repent and believe for ourselves, yet, along with all this, He saves us in a fellowship, or company, or body. "The Lord," it is said, "added to the Church daily such as were being saved." Now, if we are in a fellowship of men who are in flesh and blood, there must be signs and tokens of fellowship or brotherhood ; and if we are saved in a body, that body, if the figure be a true one, must be an organisation.

Above all, if our souls are to be perfected by the realisation of the whole work of the Incarnate Son on our behalf, we must, to adopt the words of the Apostle, take hold of (or apprehend) that for which we are ourselves apprehended of Christ Jesus. Now we are apprehended by Christ, that we should not only

realise His work or His love, and trust in Him, and lean upon Him as a man would lean upon a staff; but we are apprehended, or laid hold on, by Christ, that we should be so united to Him as members of His mystical body, that it should be true to say that we are "bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh," that our members are His members, that we are branches of Him as the living Vine; that we are in Him and He in us. Christ has apprehended us in the net of His grace, not only that we should be clothed with Him, but that in some mysterious but real way we should feed upon Him, even eat His flesh and drink His blood, in order that His life may be *in* us.

Christ has taken hold on us, not that He should throw Himself about us after the manner of a cloak or other outside robe, but that He should be *in* us and we *in* Him in a heavenly, spiritual, unspeakable, yet most real way.

Now herein was the deficiency, the stopping short, in the revival, eighty years ago, of what is called evangelical truth, which made a further restoration imperative, if we were to rise up to the height of grace which is revealed to us in Scripture.

For the crowning doctrine of the evangelical system, as it appears in the writings of such men as Simeon, Venn, Daniel Wilson, and others, and as it appears in the popular books and tracts which are circulated by those who

assume to sit in their seats, is that Christ is thrown around us as a cloak or outer garment; whereas the terms in which the Holy Ghost speaks of the closeness of our relation to our Saviour go much beyond this.

When Christ says, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me even he shall live by Me"—when, I say, the Saviour says this, He alludes to an union with Himself, which must, in the nature of things, be far more close and intimate than that set forth by Isaiah, where he says, "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."

It is much to be clothed with such a garment, to be covered with such a robe. If God had not revealed anything beyond this it would seem that the hopes and aspirations of man could not have reached forth to anything further. But God has taught us to look for much more, for it is a far greater thing that Christ should be in us as our spiritual subsistence, and then as our life, than that He should cover us after the manner of a cloak. So that the Evangelical Restoration, as I said, required to be supplemented by another one which must bring out into far stronger prominence the fact or truth of our being of the body of Christ; that we can be in some mysterious, yet most real

sense, one with Him, and He one with us, and the bringing out of this truth was the Catholic or Sacramental Restoration of forty years ago.

Now if there be a restoration to the Church of this wondrous truth of a mystical and supernatural union with Christ, of inherence in Him as a vine-branch inheres in the vine, or a member in the body, then there is a restoration of the highest truth conceivable. We cannot even imagine anything beyond this, that Christ, God and Man in one Person, should be at the right Hand of God, and yet so present that we should be in Him and He in us. Taking such expressions to be figurative, what must be the reality which underlies and gives truth to such a figure? Such a thing cannot be dismissed as mysterious, for how amazing the grace and truth which requires such mysterious words to express it! Now if there be a restoration of Divine truth to a church or an individual, that restoration must go on to lead the Church or the individual to apprehend the highest truth which comes within the range of its spiritual sight, for to a truly godly soul there can be no wilful, no conscious stopping short of what God reveals.

Then, in the next place, this restoration must be bound up with, and cannot be dis severed from, a higher view of the Sacraments of the Church, for one of these is the formal ordained

means by which the union is inaugurated, and the other the corresponding means by which it is continued and cemented.

It is very true that a very great many deeply religious persons have denied the connection between union with Christ as members of His mystical body and the due reception of the Sacraments; but though they have denied the connection in words, they have practically admitted it, for the truths pertaining to Christ's mystical body, and, above all, the practical application of these doctrines, form no part of their teaching. You may read treatises upon treatises of the writers who deny sacramental grace, and never come across any reference to the Church as the Body of Christ. It has no place in their theology. You would suppose from their writings that such a doctrine hardly existed. And yet it was the central doctrine of St. Paul's teaching, and is perpetually applied by him in a practical way to enforce on Christians holiness and purity, humble-mindedness and mutual sympathy (1 Cor. vi. 15—20; Rom. xii. 3—7; 1 Cor. xii. 12—27).

And again, this restoration of Church doctrine cannot be dissevered from, for it has its very root in, a deeper realisation of the Incarnation of the Eternal Son. For the Son of God came not amongst us as a mere spirit, but in the body of our flesh. He came to redeem and appropriate to Himself our whole nature. His

very Body being the Body which God assumed, became the point of contact between God and man—between God and the visible universe. He assumed a body, that in it He might be the second Adam, that as by partaking of the flesh of the first Adam we die, so by partaking of His Flesh we may be made alive. He came that His Body might be the root and the sustenance of a mystical Body, which mystical Body is not a mere spiritual abstraction but an outward organisation, of which organisation He ordained certain men, His Apostles, to be the first and chief members. So that the effectual setting forth of the Incarnation insensibly leads the mind of the Christian to certain results and outgoings, so to speak, of that most wondrous of all facts; which results and outgoings are no other than the Church truths of the religion we profess; which truths are the highest, the deepest, and the most mysterious which can be presented to the faith of creatures such as we are.

Such are the two restorations.

You will see from all that I have said that both these restorations were Scriptural, and both necessary. The savour of both of them must continue in us if we would ourselves abide in the whole truth of God.

The almost utter absence of the Sacramental, as well as the Evangelical element, in the preaching of our Churches for above one

hundred and fifty years, is, in our case, "the desolations of many generations."

We have then to thank God that, when He granted to some of our fathers to raise up the foundations of many generations, He granted that first of all the foundations should be sought out and found to be the most precious truths of His Holy Word in their application to the souls of men. Now, such a restoration of what is inward and spiritual must be associated with what is outward and emblematical. The idea was brought out that when men meet together in church they meet, not as they would meet in a club, or in a place of assembly, or even in a lecture-room, but they come together as the body of Christ. They come together not merely to listen, but to bear their part in common worship as the priests of God and Christ: above all to show forth before God, angels, and men the all-atoning Death; to plead it in God's appointed way, and to partake of what is blessed and sanctified by the great High Priest Himself as the communication of Himself. If men realise, or are in the way of realising all this, it cannot be but that they will strive to make all the outward associations of our houses of God to correspond with the Divine transactions which take place in them. If men build houses or places suitable to their own means and station, and the rank of those whom they expect to entertain there, they will assuredly

build churches in accordance with what they assume to be carried on there; and so the revival of Church principles has been naturally and necessarily accompanied with a corresponding restoration of the houses of God. Everything conducive to irreverence is put away as scrupulously as everything mean and unsightly is removed. It is contrary to all right views of what a church should be that in it baptized members of Christ should be so placed in their solemn public approaches to their King as to be of necessity staring into one another's faces; and so all arrangements that entail such a state of things, such as square pews and galleries three parts round the building, are done away with.

But, above all, the whole plan and arrangement of a well-restored church is such as to impress upon the people that Holy Communion is the great characteristic act of Christian worship. We do not, of course, mean by this that such arrangements depreciate preaching, but they do and must set forth that preaching is not an end, but the means to an end, which end is that Christ should be in us and we in Him, and this Holy Communion both sets forth and typifies; and it is also itself, if prayerfully and faithfully used, the one direct means of bringing about.

The work of material restoration, that is, the restoration of the fabrics of our churches, is one in which the world can take its part. Many

inferior motives, such as attachment to the Church as the National Church, reverence for that Church as a true branch of the great Catholic body, respect for the Church as a powerful institution for promoting morality and civilization; all these and many more motives come into play to help forward this work, and the results are very great indeed. There are many dioceses in which almost every Church has been restored, and that within the last twelve or fifteen years or so. The money spent upon Church restoration within the last quarter of a century must be reckoned not by hundreds of thousands, but by millions, and this not including the amount spent on the building of new churches, of which above three thousand have been built since the beginning of the century, some at an enormous cost of fifty or sixty thousand pounds, and adorned with wood and stone carvings, marbles, and stained glass, so as to make them, in proportion to their size, as costly as any churches of bygone days. It may be indeed said, and, I think, in a true sense, "the house has been filled with the odour of the ointment."

Then, in the last place, there has been a wonderful restoration, both of forms of devotion and of the most perfect manner of offering up these forms.

Look, for instance, at the restoration, rather the revival, of the ancient hymns of the Church.

In nothing has the "repairing of the breach, the restoring of paths to dwell in," been more astonishing than in this. The Evangelical restoration left us with a deluge of hymns. In using the greater part of these it is not too much to say we sung ourselves, our frames, our feelings, or our sinfulness, almost our passions. But it was discovered that there were locked up in the old Latin service books hymns, in which Christians could far more directly sing, not themselves, but the Saviour; Christ Himself, God and Man; Christ, not as an abstraction, or the product of our imaginations, but the Christ of the four Evangelists. The translation of these ancient hymns by Bishops Heber and Mant inspired others, such as Neale, to translate others, so that now we sing in our churches and in our own tongue some songs of praise with which these walls resounded four hundred years ago.

Then, in addition to this, look at the restoration of services; of daily services, of Saint's Day services, of Lenten and Advent services, of Harvest and of Dedication Festivals. Look at the revival of the weekly offertory, so that many congregations never meet together without the offering of their substance as well as of their words. But, above all—far above all—look at the restoration of a weekly Celebration. So that in an increasing number of our churches the Lord's Day never comes round without the

offering up of the one service which Christ our King ordained.

Then look at the restorations of what is right and ancient in the offering up of our services. The service of our branch of the Church, if rendered solemnly, reverentially, and with its due accompaniment of chant and song, is, I believe, the grandest service in Christendom. Look at the restoration effected almost in our own time in the offering up of the words of the Psalter—words which our Saviour sanctified by Himself offering them up to His Father—words which it is a distinctive mark of the Church to appropriate to herself in their entirety. Compare matters now with what they were, say in the reign of Charles I. A credible ecclesiastical historian tells us that it was the rule for the minister alone to read the psalms in church just as the lessons are read. Think of the frigid formality of such a practice, by which, too, the congregations, all of them priests of God, were deprived of their right to join with united voices in what has been not unfitly called the “prayer-book of Christ and His saints.” And then think of the old and new versions in which form alone the psalms, except in our cathedrals, were ever sung. Conceive a nation distinguished above all other nations of modern Europe for its poetry, the nation of Shakspeare and Milton, offering to God in solemn worship its worst, its vilest rhyme.

Think of this, and thank God that we have been led to restore the chanting of the psalms.

The very word "psalm," in the original language of the Scriptures, means a form of words to be sung; and Scripture assures us that they were thus sung in the temple worship, and that there was an enormous quire to sing them (1 Chron. xxv. 6—8). But you must remember that when they thus sung these psalms it must have been in the way of a chant; and for this reason, in the original Hebrew of the psalms there is no such things as measures or lines of so many syllables, or of such quantities; neither is there any such thing as rhymes, so that they should be sung to any music of the fashion of a modern hymn tune: so that, if the psalms were sung at all, they must have been sung to music which does not require equal length in the verses of the matter which is sung, and the only music which could be available would be something of the nature of a chant.

Again, chanting is the way of singing which respects the very words of the Holy Spirit. If you turn the psalms into metre or rhyming couplets in order to sing them to a modern tune, you alter the words of the Holy Spirit to suit your music. If you chant them you leave the words of the Spirit unaltered and fit the music to them. I need scarcely ask which is most reverential, which does most honour to the Word of God.

One word in conclusion.

We congratulate ourselves, and we thank God, that He has revived His work amongst us, but is this altogether a matter of congratulation? Not wholly so, for how has it come to pass that our doctrines, our fabrics, and our services wanted restoration? Must it not have been because we, as a Church, had declined from and forgotten our first principles, so that they needed to be restored or revived, and not only the outward embodiment of them in our fabrics and our services? So that confession for past sins, and self-abasement for our not having held fast God's truth, must mingle with our praises and thanksgivings. And let us remember that a restoration of the outward and visible will be a sad mockery in the sight of the Searcher of hearts, unless we hold fast and realise the spiritual and the invisible—that is, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the watchful keeping of the Faith once delivered to the Saints.

There was in the time of Christ a great restoration of God's temple ; but it was a rebuilding of the temple made with hands, and of that alone. The Spirit was departing, and so the kingdom of God was taken from those who gloried in the outward fabric, and knew not Him Who was greater than the temple.

May this be far from us. We trust that, whatever temporal reverses there may be in

store for our Church, the Spirit of God is not leaving us. Rather the increasing alienation of the world is a sign of the abiding amongst us of Him Whom the world cannot receive, for it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him.

Let, then, this outward and visible restoration be but a type of what is going on within each one of us, priest and people alike, so that when these beautiful fabrics, which seem to be built for eternity, pass away, as pass away they must, we, as the living temple of which they are but the scaffolding, may abide; for this world passeth away, and with the world all that is in it, but he that doeth the will of God—he that abideth in Christ, and Christ in him—he that follows Christ's steps, and lives with His life—he shall abide for ever.

THE END.

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